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# VLADIMIR ASHKENAZY CONDUCTS BORENSTEIN

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Vladimir Ashkenazy, with the Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra and the promising young violinist Irmina Trynkos, presents for the first time on record three works by Nimrod Borenstein, a supremely melodic composer who also makes characteristic use of counterpoint. The past few years have seen his compositions premiered and performed at prestigious venues including the Royal Opera House and the Royal Festival Hall in London and Carnegie Hall in New York.

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## SOUNDS OF AMERICA

*A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada*

### Agócs

The Debrecen Passion<sup>a</sup>. Requiem Fragments<sup>b</sup>.  
By the Streams of Babylon<sup>c</sup>. ... Like Treasure  
Hidden in a Field<sup>b</sup>. Vessel<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Kati Agócs, <sup>c</sup>Lisa Bielawa, <sup>d</sup>Margot Rood,

<sup>b</sup>Sonja Tengblad *sops* <sup>d</sup>Katherine Growdon *mez*

<sup>a</sup>Lorelei Ensemble / Beth Willer; <sup>bcd</sup>Boston

Modern Orchestra Project / Gil Rose

BMOP/sound © 1046 (57' • DDD • T/t)



The music of Kati Agócs on the Boston Modern Orchestra Project's new

recording shimmers and seethes, reflecting the tensions that the Canadian composer sets forth in vocal and instrumental splendour. Each of the five works possesses a sound world that evokes the specific sacred texts or implications to haunting impact.

Agócs pays tribute to her Hungarian heritage in the disc's titular score, *The Debrecen Passion*, a setting of Christ's persecution and death built around verses by the poet Szilárd Borbély (1963–2014), a native of the Hungarian city of Debrecen. As she melds the 12 female voices of the remarkable Lorelei Ensemble with glowing orchestral sonorities, Agócs also suspends vocal lines on Latin and Jewish texts. The 23-minute work is an iridescent wonder.

Agócs shares more of her bold sense of colour and architecture in the other pieces, including two for orchestra alone. *Requiem Fragments* evolves from peaceful to anguished episodes through seamless interweaving of incandescent themes. A different array of spiritual moods unfolds in ... *Like Treasure Hidden in a Field*, which highlights Agócs's keen ear for instrumental possibilities.

Voices again collaborate with orchestra in *By the Streams of Babylon*, with two sopranos (Agócs and Lisa Bielawa) lifting Psalm 137 on phrases that leap and float, and sound both ancient and contemporary. *Vessel* exemplifies the composer's penetrating individuality

### GRAMOPHONE talks to ...

#### Del Sol Quartet

The San Francisco-based string quartet talk about their collaboration with Terry Riley

#### What draws you to Terry Riley's music?

Terry has reinvigorated the string quartet genre, yet few ensembles regularly take up the challenge of these pieces. We asked Terry to write for string quartet with guitar so we could have a piece to play with the wonderful guitarist Gyan Riley, Terry's son. We fell in love with Terry's music and have become fierce advocates for his works.

#### Does performing from memory change your perception of the music?

Music from improvised or oral traditions forms a big part of Terry's musical thought. Although his compositions sound so natural and intuitive, all those shifting, interlocking rhythms are very complex. Freeing ourselves from the printed score brings us a little closer to the purity of that creative process. We can enjoy the music and listen better when we don't have the option of fact-checking all those little black dots on the page.



#### Why Stefano Scodanibbio as a coupling?

Stefano Scodanibbio had a phenomenal sense of musical invention. He really took bass-playing into a whole new realm of possibilities and became a big hero to lots of string players – including us! The two albums that Scodanibbio and Terry Riley made together are really special and it seemed natural to want to combine their music here again.

#### What's next?

We're looking forward to performing *Dark Queen Mantra* with Gyan on November 16 as part of our Whole Sol Festival in San Francisco celebrating Del Sol's 25th anniversary, where Terry will be joining us with some solo piano.

in a work set in English, Hebrew and Latin scored for chamber ensemble, two sopranos and alto (Margot Rood, Sonja Tengblad and Katherine Growdon).

The Boston Modern Orchestra Project and conductor Gil Rose invest each score with incisive and brilliant intensity, as do all of the vocalists. They should continue to champion Agócs, a composer of imposing artistic gifts. **Donald Rosenberg**

### Argento

The Andrée Expedition.

From the Diary of Virginia Woolf

Brian Mulligan *bar* Timothy Long *pf*

Naxos American Classics © 8 559828 (80' • DDD)



Naxos's policy of devoting single discs to single composers has

methodically expanded the repertoire and given important young performers like Brian Mulligan and Timothy Long the opportunity to record two major works together which otherwise they might have come to only years apart, if at all.

These two song-cycles are literally worlds apart: *The Andrée Expedition* was



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David Bernard and the Park Avenue Chamber Symphony bring a collective intensity and drive to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony – see review on page V

Argento's response to a quixotically failed balloon trip to the North Pole based on the letters and journals of the three Swedish friends who perished in the attempt. Its mixture of folly and courage is captured in the final words: 'It is indeed a wonderful journey through the night. I am cold but will not wake the two sleepers.' As the 45-minute narrative progresses, Mulligan relaxes into the three roles he must play and, with Long brilliantly at his side, mines a succession of poignant gem-like moments, exquisite distillations of love and brief emotional surges which lead along the trio's slow frozen path to mortality, like a modern day *Winterreise* without the melodies.

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 1975, *From the Diary of Virginia Woolf* yields itself gracefully to Mulligan's lyrical feel and declamatory power, while the texts and music draw him in almost without his seeming to know it. In both cycles, the piano-writing puts the pianist into a nearly equal relationship, which Long handles splendidly.

The clarity and presence of the sound, recorded at Abeshouse Productions in Pelham, NY, combined with Mulligan's superb articulation, almost compensates for there being no printed texts.

Laurence Vittes

## JS Bach • Hu

JS Bach Goldberg Variations, BWV988

Hu Afterthoughts on Bach's Goldberg Variations

Chih-Long Hu *pf*

Blue Griffin © BGR423 (76' • DDD)



Bach's *Goldberg Variations* abounds in world-class piano recordings, including

several memorable recent versions covered by yours truly in these pages. That doesn't stop young contenders from plying their wares. Chih-Long Hu generally favours tempos that relate to one another, and he observes all repeats except for the 'A' section of Variation 16 (the French Overture), plus those in Vars 13, 15, 25 and the *Aria da capo*.

The opening *Aria* benefits from felicitous shifts in colour, while Vars 2 and 3 feature easy-going linear interplay. Yet Hu works too hard underlining Var 4's cross-rhythms, notwithstanding imaginative ornamentation on the repeats. The rapid runs and wide leaps in Vars 5 and 14 grow slower and thicker as the music progresses, a fault many pianists share on disc. Hu's supple *détaché* articulation in Var 8 contrasts with his heavy-handed Fughetta (Var 10) and overly literal, unlitling Vars 11 and 20. He accents each of

Var 15's down-beats to the point of fatigue, and treats Var 19's three-part counterpoint all on the same level. One can carp over Hu's generic phrase taperings in the minor-key canon at the seventh (Var 21) and 'Black Pearl' variation (No 25), but the pianism here is undoubtedly sensitive. The canon at the ninth (Var 27) is brisk and forceful but the dead air of the practice room permeates Hu's arid, rigidly metronomic dispatch of the toccata-like Var 29.

Following the *Aria da capo*, Hu offers *Afterthoughts* via his *Goldberg Variations* in various styles. He prefaces the *Aria* with a Bachian recitative, then launches into fake Mozart. If you've wanted to hear Schumann's 'Von fremden Ländern und Menschen' from *Kinderszenen* welded to the *Goldberg* ground bass, here's your chance. A rag-based variation suffers from paltry melodic invention and Hu's stiff feeling for the idiom's syncopated syntax. But who'd have guessed that the *Aria* and Hoagy Carmichael's 'Georgia on my mind' might be compatible bedfellows? Hu's final variation evokes Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea, yet tends to wander, and leans heavily on chromatic noodling. I suspect the novelty of these *Afterthoughts* will wear off after several hearings, as will the limited interpretative and emotional scope of Hu's *Goldbergs*.

Jed Distler

# BEETHOVEN

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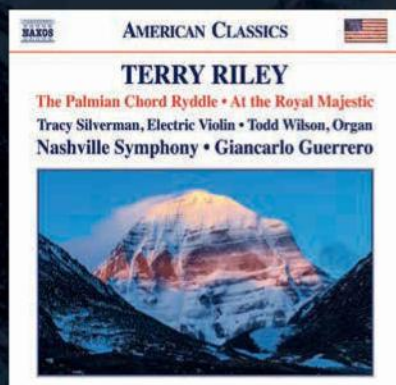
# RILEY

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## Beethoven

Symphony No 9, 'Choral', Op 125

**Kristin Sampson** *sop* **Edith Dowd** *contr* **Cameron Schutza** *ten* **Brian Kontes** *bass* **West Point Glee Club; New Amsterdam Singers; Young New Yorkers' Chorus; Park Avenue Chamber Symphony / David Bernard**  
Recursive (C) RC2058306 (66' • DDD)



The catalogue is bursting with recordings of Beethoven's Ninth

Symphony that are undeniably flawed yet nevertheless contain enough points of interest to beckon one's attention. This rather hardscrabble performance with David Bernard and the Park Avenue Chamber Symphony is a case in point.

If the first movement's flattened-out dynamics rob the opening of its mystery and gathering momentum, the reduced forces and smaller number of strings bring lots of woodwind detail and brass punctuations to the fore. Bernard observes both repeats in the Scherzo and takes the composer's *Molto vivace* to heart, while the musicians' collective intensity and drive compensate for their tendency to rush at times (the resonant and diffuse ambience doesn't help).

The *Adagio* disappoints in regard to perfunctory, inexpressive phrasing of the second theme and patchy intonation in some of the more exposed passages. However, the cello/double bass recitatives come vividly alive in the finale's opening section, and the pastoral variations on the 'Ode to Joy' theme likewise prove well contoured and shaped. Brian Kontes's gorgeous bass sonority doesn't compensate for stretching his opening solo to arguably aria-like dimensions, while soprano Kristin Sampson stands out in the vocal quartet sequences for her wobbly vibrato above the staff. Bernard drives the *Alla marcia* to blaring, hard-pressed effect, undermining tenor Cameron Schutza's superb rendering of the tenor solo. The combined choral forces do their finest work in loudest moments but the unison tenor/bass lines at the start of the *Andante maestoso* (13'59") lack sufficient tonal focus. As for the coda, Bernard adheres to Beethoven's metronome markings that minimise any contrast between the pentultimate *Maestoso* and final *Prestissimo*.

In sum, Bernard and his musicians approach the Ninth like a brave soul who scales Mount Everest wearing no more than a sweat suit and sneakers, and still manages to arrive at the summit in one piece. More or less ... **Jed Distler**

## Laitman

The Scarlet Letter

**Laura Claycomb** *sop* ..... **Hester Prynne**  
**Dominic Armstrong** *ten* ..... **Arthur Dimmesdale**  
**Malcolm MacKenzie** *bar* ..... **Roger Chillingworth**  
**Daniel Belcher** *bar* ..... **Governor Bellingham**  
**Kyle Knapp** *ten* ..... **John Wilson**  
**Margaret Gawrysiak** *mez* ..... **Mistress Hibbons**  
**Opera Colorado Chorus and Orchestra / Ari Peltó**  
Naxos American Classics (M) ② 8 669034/5  
(111' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House, Denver, May 7, 10, 13 & 15, 2016

Includes synopsis; libretto available from **naxos.com**



Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter* has inspired several

operas, including rarely performed versions with music by Walter Damrosch, Fredric Kroll and Margaret Garwood. The most recent, Lori Laitman's rapturous adaptation set to elegant verses by David Mason, received its world premiere in May 2016 by Opera Colorado. The Naxos recording of the work is drawn from those initial performances, which – at least in purely sonic terms – appear to have done great honour to this deeply affecting creation.

The first thing that leaps into one's ears is the sheer beauty of the music. Laitman has devoted much of her career to the art song, and her ability to meld words with lyrical, often soaring lines is on abundant display in her opera. The score pinpoints the distinctive qualities of the characters. Hester Prynne, forced to wear the letter 'A' as a symbol of her adultery, sings in urgent, rhapsodic phrases, while her lover, the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale, ranges from anxious reflections to dramatic outbursts, and Roger Chillingworth, Hester's estranged husband, strikes sinister notes on his vengeful path. The people of the Puritan community reveal their moral pretensions in passages of reverent rigidity.

The Opera Colorado production benefits from the presence of splendid principal singers and a fine chorus. Laura Claycomb uses her radiant soprano to poignant effect, especially when revealing the woman's strength in the vocal stratosphere. As Dimmesdale, tenor Dominic Armstrong is forceful and touching, and baritone Malcolm MacKenzie brings grave intensity to Chillingworth. Mezzo-soprano Margaret Gawrysiak is a vibrant terror as the town witch, Mistress Hibbons.

Led by Ari Peltó, the Opera Colorado Orchestra play Laitman's score with the refinement and urgency needed to catapult this impressive and fervent opera.

**Donald Rosenberg**

## Riley • Scodanibbio

**Riley** *Dark Queen Mantra*<sup>a</sup>. The Wheel & Mythic Birds Waltz **Scodanibbio** *Mas lugares* (su madrigali di Monteverdi)

**Del Sol Quartet** with <sup>a</sup>**Gyan Riley** *gtr*  
Sono Luminus (C) DSL92215 (62' • DDD)



As Pwyll ap Siôn noted in his 80th-birthday feature on the composer (A/15),

there is more to Terry Riley than *In C*, which has proved both the basis of his fortunes and a millstone for his reputation. Those familiar with that masterpiece of minimalism, or the improvisatory works of the 1970s, may well be surprised by the more precisely notated and through-composed works on this new release, played by the pioneering Del Sol Quartet.

*Dark Queen Mantra* (2015), for string quartet and electric guitar, was composed ahead of Riley's 80th birthday for the Del Sol to perform with his son, Gyan. Its three movements were inspired by Spain: a hotel, a Goya painting and – more elusively – the 'dark queen mantra' of the complex, large-scale finale in which, as Riley comments, 'it gets dark'. The rapport between quartet and guitarist is palpable in a performance that compels attention, so much so that one can forgive the occasional intonational indelicacies. These are absent from *The Wheel & Mythic Birds Waltz* (1983), a multifaceted fantasy for quartet on jazz and Indian rhythms that never involves a waltz – although allegedly Tibetan birds had a hand in its inspiration!

Set between them are the five reworkings or reimaginings of Monteverdi madrigals that comprise *Mas lugares* (2003) by virtuoso double bassist and composer (and occasional collaborator with Riley) Stefano Scodanibbio (1956-2012). An object lesson in how to create fully satisfying music expressively and technically, *Mas lugares* is a real find, the centrepiece of a splendid, if challenging, disc. **Guy Rickards**

## 'Alma española'

**Falla** *Siete Canciones populares españolas* (transcr Llobet, rev Pujol/Isbin)<sup>a</sup> **Granados**

*Danzas españolas* – No 5, *Andaluzá* **Lara**  
*Granada* (arr Isbin)<sup>a</sup> **Lorca** *Canciones españolas antiguas* (arr Isbin)<sup>a</sup> – *El café de Chinitas*;

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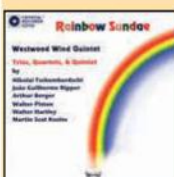
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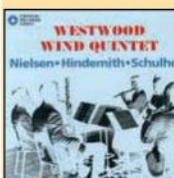
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<sup>a</sup>**Isabel Leonard** sgr **Sharon Isbin** gtr  
 Bridge © BRIDGE9491 (66' • DDD • T/t)



Isabel Leonard and Sharon Isbin illuminate Spanish art songs in orbit

around Lorca and Falla by mixing popular favourites and surprising discoveries with two jewelled pieces for solo guitar.

In each of the nine Lorca songs, reflecting the poet/composer's commitment to speaking with the voices and instruments of the people, Leonard and Isbin find and intensify their individual message. At the end of 'Los mozos de Monleón', a six-minute narrative with spoken voice and recitative about a dead bullfighter and his widowed mother, the silence in the final bar is thunderous. Leonard and Isbin swing with infectious enthusiasm into the concluding 'Sevillanas del siglo XVIII'. The Falla is equally fine if less theatrical in its impact.

Among the showpieces, their performance of Rodrigo's *Aranjuez, ma pensée*, set to the poem Victoria Kahmi wrote in 1988 while listening to the slow movement of her husband's *Concierto de Aranjuez*, is a study in exquisite beauty masking controlled emotion, each arc of Leonard's phrasing telling a story of its own, Isbin's guitar delivering spectacular rhapsodic riffs among the strums. The solo tracks are an audiophile's dream. In the opening of Tárrega's *Capricho árabe* Isbin imbues each tone with its own special beauty without restricting flow, creating a resonance that hangs in the air like aural perfume.

Recorded at the American Academy of Arts and Letters in New York, the close-up sound is suffused with the intensity of the playing. Allan Kozinn's booklet notes tell the absorbing story of how the recording came about and what you are listening to.

**Laurence Vittes**

## 'Entrez, le Diable!'

'The Virtuoso Cello at the Concert Spirituel'  
**Barrière** Sonatas - Book 1 No 4; Book 3 No 5  
**Berteau** Sonata, Op 1 No 3 **Lanzetti** Sonata, Op 1 No 8 **François Martin** Sonata, Op 2 No 4  
**Juliana Soltis** vc  
**Adaiha MacAdam-Somer** va da gamba



Baroque cellist Juliana Soltis captures the finesse of 1730s Paris in a programme of lesser-known French works

**Lucas Harris** theorbo **Justin Murphy-Mancini** hpd  
 Acis © APL72276 (62' • DDD)



It's almost unfathomable that a cello could provoke a scandal, but this

appears to have been in the case in the 1730s in France. Stepping to the fore in place of the elegant viola da gamba, the temperamental cello shocked ears at an admired concert series, compelling the French viol player Hubert Le Blanc to declare the offending instrument 'a miserable canker, wretch, and poor Devil'. Thus this illuminating disc's title, 'Entrez, le Diable! The Virtuoso Cello at the Concert Spirituel'.

The brains (and limbs) behind the programme is baroque cellist Juliana Soltis, who performs works by four French composers with almost diabolical

personality and, *oui*, finesse. The composers' names wouldn't trip off the tongue of most listeners but their music reveals why the cello came across as so progressive and dangerous.

Salvatore Lanzetti's Sonata in E minor thrusts the cello into fierce displays of technique and impassioned rhetoric, while Martin Berteau's Sonata in G makes enchanting use of ethereal harmonics. Soltis states in her booklet notes that François Martin prompted the cello to face an unusual challenge in the first movement of his captivating Sonata in D: using the player's chin to produce a pedal tone. Two sonatas by Jean-Baptiste Barrière give the cello ample opportunity to sing and perform acrobatics.

The intrepid Soltis hurls herself into all of the music, producing gritty sounds and explosive passagework when she isn't caressing lines with poetic grace. Her colleagues could hardly play with more devilish allure. **Donald Rosenberg**

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# Remembering the great Pavarotti, 10 years on

Last month I visited Verona's arena, a Roman amphitheatre familiar to audiences today as the setting for outdoor opera and other musical spectaculars. The concert – which veered with exuberance from Plácido Domingo and José Carreras, to stars of Italian rock, to footballers, and back again – was to mark the 10th anniversary of the death of Luciano Pavarotti. I was too young to have seen Pavarotti in his prime – indeed I was not yet a teenager when he first came into my consciousness as part of the Three Tenors phenomenon in 1990. He became, for many, synonymous with the 'operatic tenor', and for a generation 'Nessun Dorma' became not a key aria in Puccini's *Turandot* but quite simply one of the best-known pieces of music in the world.

Pavarotti, alongside his fellow Three Tenor colleagues, radically changed the classical music business of course. An album of mainly operatic arias sold millions of copies, and arguably took the genre of accessible classical music known as 'crossover' further than many (the annual Pavarotti and Friends charity concerts were a true melting pot of musical styles). But like many figures who stride an art form, Pavarotti – one of the greatest opera singers of his era, yet one whose reach was universal – overrides any easy attempt to categorise him, or his music-making, or his impact. Even 10 years on I can't think of any comparable classical star today who is a popular cultural icon in the way Pavarotti was. None of his peers – however respected or revered – fits the mould.

Did we learn anything new, a decade on, about the great man? Well, we heard first hand that



the foundation established in his name is clearly supporting some impressive young singers. But what struck me as rather touching is the way that, for all that the music world considered Pavarotti a global figure, Italians held him – hold him still – as one of their own. From the crowd's chanting from beyond the Arena, punctuating proceedings, to the succession of Italian stars paying homage, or 'singing along' with him (which worked surprisingly well) in a succession of pop or rock numbers, here was a global icon who is still firmly rooted in his own nation's affection. It was felt at the time that we shall not see the like of him again; 10 years on, I daresay that still holds true.

If nobody can match Pavarotti's reach, one who comes close is Dame Kiri Te Kanawa. Like Pavarotti she possessed one of the most exquisite voices of her time. And having sung at a royal wedding, and even been sprinkled with a touch of sports-anthem stardust herself, her reputation also resonates beyond the classical world. Such that, when she chose the occasion of receiving her *Gramophone* Lifetime Achievement Award to announce her retirement, it was prime-time news. We should be pleased when the wider world pauses to acknowledge such moments; it draws attention to the great gifts figures such as Dame Kiri, and Pavarotti, have given to music and to our world, and allows us to say a heartfelt thank you. Incidentally, you can still watch the full ceremony of the 2017 *Gramophone* Classical Music Awards – including of course Dame Kiri's acceptance speech – at [medici.tv](http://medici.tv) and at [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk).

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## THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



In this month's Icons feature, **BORIS GILTBURG** writes about fellow pianist Emil Gilels: 'This challenge

was fully rewarded by the deep acquaintance with him which came after listening to his entire musical output (I probably listened to 40 CDs),' says Giltburg. 'I now love him even more!'



'Recordings of Machaut's Mass stretch back over 60 years and cover about three-dozen recordings,'

says **FABRICE FITCH**, the early music specialist and author of this issue's Collection. 'It's such an iconic piece that the opportunity to explore the discography was irresistible.'



'Interviewing Carolyn Sampson, Iestyn Davies and Joseph Middleton about their new disc of

vocal duets was great fun,' says **LINDSAY KEMP**, author of this month's feature. 'Yet serious points were made amid all the laughter – I got a good idea of what the mood of the sessions must have been!'

*Gramophone*, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is *the* magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

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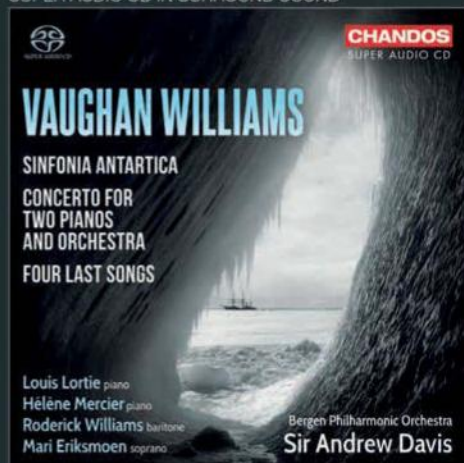
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# October Releases

SUPER AUDIO CD IN SURROUND SOUND



## Disc of the Month Vaughan Williams: Sinfonia Antartica, etc.

Soloists | Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra | Sir Andrew Davis

This eagerly awaited final volume in our historic series of Vaughan Williams's Symphonies features an exceptional cast and a rare combination of repertoire. While the indefatigable piano duo Louis Lortie and Hélène Mercier tackle the virtuosic Double Piano Concerto, the baritone Roderick Williams OBE offers breathtaking interpretations of the rarely heard, yet passionate *Four Last Songs*. The disc's centrepiece is the majestic *Sinfonia Antartica*, stunningly evoking the implacable, frozen landscape of the Antarctic.

CHSA 5186

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## Karayev Orchestral Works Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra | Kirill Karabits

This set of lyrical, rhythmically exciting, and colourfully orchestrated pieces with the Bournemouth SO and its Chief Conductor, Kirill Karabits, who appears on Chandos for the first time, marks the start of a new series devoted to lesser-known composers from former Soviet Union countries.

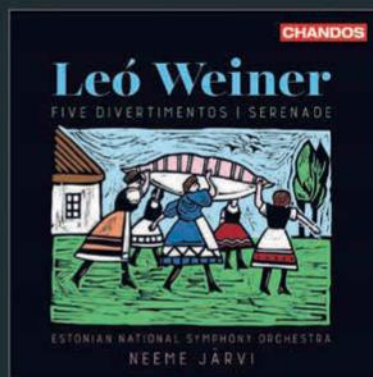
CHSA 5203



## Louis Lortie plays Chopin, Vol. 5

Louis Lortie's Chopin series is achieving landmark status, as confirmed by the increasingly enthusiastic reviews of progressive volumes. This fifth one sumptuously highlights the Polish influences in Chopin's music, offering gems among the fascinating mazurkas and vigorous polonaises.

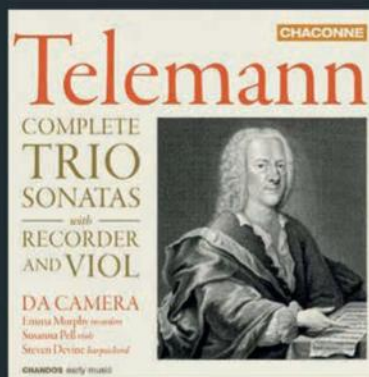
CHAN 10943



## Weiner Serenade Five Divertimentos Estonian National Symphony Orchestra | Neeme Järvi

Neeme Järvi and his Estonian National Symphony Orchestra here reveal the delightful, witty Hungarian style of Leó Weiner, encapsulated in the freshness and fluidity of the engaging, yet too rarely performed Serenade and five Divertimentos.

CHAN 10959



## Telemann Complete Trio Sonatas with Recorder and Viol Emma Murphy | Susanna Pell Steven Devine

The specialist early-music ensemble Da Camera marks the 250th anniversary of Telemann's death with this unique recording of original trio sonatas, among the greatest pieces Telemann ever composed.

CHAN 0817

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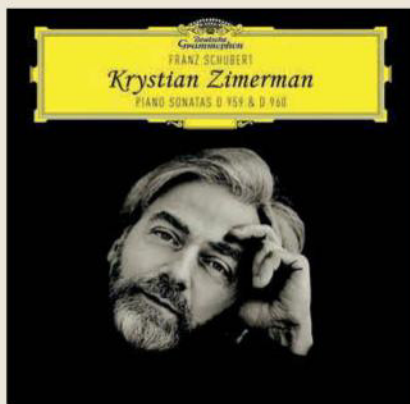
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# GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

**Martin Culliford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews**



RECORDING OF THE MONTH



## SCHUBERT

Piano Sonatas  
Nos 20 & 21

**Krystian Zimerman** *pf*  
DG

► **HARRIET SMITH'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 40**

Krystian Zimerman has an extraordinary ear for detail, both in terms of interpretation and sound; it's been a long time since his last solo disc, but both the rarity and the quality make this quite an event.



## MENDELSSOHN

Symphony No 2, 'Lobgesang'  
**Monteverdi Choir; London Symphony Orchestra / Sir John Eliot Gardiner**  
LSO Live

This uplifting performance concludes Gardiner's rewarding cycle of the composer's symphonies: a fitting end.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 46**



## RACHMANINOV

Piano Concerto No 2

**Boris Giltburg** *pf*  
**Royal Scottish National Orchestra / Carlos Miguel Prieto**  
Naxos

That such familiar music can sound this thrilling is testimony to both the work's enduring appeal and its soloist's skill.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 50**



## CPE BACH

Fantasias & Sonatas  
**Alexei Lubimov** *tangent pf*  
ECM New Series

An absolutely fascinating release,

both for the unusual instrument and for what Alexei Lubimov, highly tuned to its unique sound world, achieves with it.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 70**

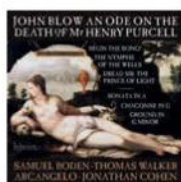


## DEBUSSY Piano Works

**Steven Osborne** *pf*  
Hyperion  
Steven Osborne explores some of Debussy's most

sublime, poetic and painterly music with a real sense of its intrigue, drama and beauty. A very fine recording, from a very fine pianist.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 73**



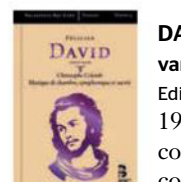
## BLOW An Ode on the Death of Mr Henry Purcell

**Arcangelo / Jonathan Cohen**  
Hyperion

Arcangelo under

Jonathan Cohen go from strength to strength; on this latest album they offer expert and engaging advocacy of the music of Purcell's teacher, John Blow.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 82**



## DAVID 'Portraits, Vol 4' various artists

Ediciones Singulares  
19th-century French composer Félicien David couldn't be better served

than by this exploratory presentation of his music on a label earning a real reputation for being at all times high quality and thought-provoking.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 83**



## 'EIN FESTE BURG IST UNSER GOTT'

Luther and the Music of the Reformation  
**Vox Luminis / Lionel Meunier**  
Ricercar

As we mark 500 years since the Reformation, Vox Luminis offer a wonderfully performed – and packaged – survey of its impact on music.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 89**



## 'MUSIC FROM THE PETERHOUSE PARTBOOKS, VOL 5'

**Blue Heron / Scott Metcalfe**  
Blue Heron

American choir Blue Heron offer us extremely fine singing on this superb recording of little-heard repertoire from the latter years of Henry VIII.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 90**



## MOZART Il sogno di Scipione

**Chorus and Orchestra of Classical Opera / Ian Page**  
Signum  
Early Mozart

gets a characteristically committed and compelling performance from the ever-impressive Ian Page and his Classical Opera group.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 97**



## DVD/BLU-RAY

**FACCIO Hamlet**  
**Prague Philharmonic Choir; Vienna Symphony Orchestra / Paolo Carignani**  
C Major Entertainment

This release of a virtually unknown 19th-century Shakespearean opera constitutes, so writes our reviewer Mark Pullinger, 'a major operatic rediscovery'.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 96**



## REISSUE/ARCHIVE

### RACHMANINOV Preludes

**Moura Lympny** *pf*  
Decca Eloquence  
More Rachmaninov, and quite a historic

event – the first recording of all his Preludes, made by Moura Lympny in 1941-2.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 74**



Listen to many of the Editor's Choice recordings online at **qobuz.com**

# FOR THE RECORD

## Dame Kiri draws career to a close at Gramophone Awards



**D**ame Kiri Te Kanawa drew her singing career to a close last month by announcing that she will never sing in public again. The New Zealand soprano, one of the best-loved artists of her era, chose the occasion of *Gramophone* bestowing on her a Lifetime Achievement Award to make her retirement official. In an emotional conclusion to her acceptance speech at the Awards, she paid tribute to the support of her country, audiences around the world, and the sacrifices made by her parents. However, as she told Editor-in-Chief James Jolly recently, such is her work supporting the next generation of singers – one of whom, New Zealand baritone Julien Van Mellaerts, has just won the 2017 Wigmore Hall/Kohn Foundation International Song Competition (see right) – that she doesn't consider herself fully retired.

A full tribute to Dame Kiri's extraordinary contribution to the art of singing – from Mozart to Strauss, via Verdi and Bernstein – can be found in the Awards section of [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk), along with her fascinating podcast interview with James Jolly. But to truly experience what made this soprano such a distinctive and distinguished artist, nothing can beat devoting time to exploring her recordings; our playlist compiled by Hugo Shirley, also available on our website and including recommendations of those signature roles – Mozart's Countess and Strauss's Marschallin – is an excellent place to start.

## ICA Classics releases first Richard Itter Archive CDs

**I**CA Classics has been mining the BBC and Richard Itter archives and announced the October release of historic recordings of some of the greatest artists of the last century. The BBC issues will appear as a box-set, Volume 2 of the 'BBC Legends' series (Volume 1 was released in 2013), to feature Toscanini, David Oistrakh, Richter, Flagstad, Beecham, Stravinsky, Hess, Rubinstein, Menuhin, Britten, Segovia and the Borodin Quartet, among many others. It will be released across 20 CDs for the budget price of £40.

The Richard Itter Archive recordings include artists such as Karajan with the Philharmonia, Klemperer with the Philharmonia and BBC Symphony, du Pré, Rostropovich, Menuhin, Bruno Walter, and Böhm in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*. Rare (because they were contracted to different labels) is the collaboration between Karajan and Clara Haskil in Mozart's Piano Concerto K488 (1956). Also in the set is Brahms's First Symphony and Schumann's Fourth conducted by Guido Cantelli (1953).

Richard Itter, founder of the Lyrita label in 1959, captured an extraordinary legacy of live, broadcast performances from his home in Buckinghamshire which went on to form an extensive private collection; the recordings have largely survived in good condition. ICA Classics has signed a long-term agreement with Lyrita Recorded Edition, responsible for the Richard Itter Trust, and the remastered recordings will be issued as single- and multiple-set releases at mid-price.

## Birmingham gets Royal title

Birmingham Conservatoire celebrated the opening of its new £57m home to students last month by receiving a 'Royal' title.

Julian Lloyd Webber, Principal of the newly named Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, said it was a 'hugely significant' moment. He continued: 'With our new name and magnificent new home, we intend to set the global benchmark for music and drama education and performance.'

## Decca deal for Karl Jenkins

Composer Karl Jenkins has signed a multi-album deal with Decca Records, which also sees his existing recording catalogue move to the label in December next year. The first release will be 'Symphonic Adiemus', featuring a new arrangement for full mixed choir and orchestra of parts of *Adiemus*, his hugely successful 1995 composition.

## Wigmore song winner revealed

The 2017 Wigmore Hall/Kohn Foundation International Song Competition has been won by New Zealand baritone Julien Van Mellaerts. His success follows on from victory in the 2017 Kathleen Ferrier Awards, also held at London's Wigmore Hall. Clearly a name to look out for.

## Sir Peter Hall: a great opera director



Sir Peter Hall leaves a significant operatic legacy

**P**ublished tributes to the director Sir Peter Hall – founder of the Royal Shakespeare Company and former director of the National Theatre, who died last month aged 86 – have understandably focused on his theatrical legacy. His work in opera, however, deserves just as much praise, and he will be particularly remembered as Artistic Director of Glyndebourne Festival Opera from 1984 to 1990. During his tenure,

he directed more than 20 productions, including Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which was revived nine times. He was also behind a series of Baroque opera productions at Glyndebourne, including several featuring Dame Janet Baker in key roles (Cavalli's *La Calisto*, Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* and Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*), as well as *L'incoronazione di Poppea* with his then-wife Maria Ewing. In addition, with Ewing he directed *Carmen* and *Salome*. Many of his Glyndebourne productions are available on DVD including *La cenerentola*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *Fidelio*, *Albert Herring* and *La traviata*.

Hall also directed Wagner's *Ring* cycle at Bayreuth with Sir Georg Solti in the pit, a production known as the 'English *Ring*'. Among new operas whose premieres he directed were Tippett's *The Knot Garden* (Covent Garden, 1970) and *New Year* (Houston, 1989). Hall's opera work took him to the Royal Opera (Covent Garden), the Met, Houston Grand Opera, Los Angeles Opera, the Lyric Opera, Chicago and others.

## ONE TO WATCH

### Noa Wildschut Violinist

Noa Wildschut comes highly recommended, and not just by us. Anne-Sophie Mutter, who has nurtured the 16-year-old's career through both a scholarship from the Anne-Sophie Mutter Foundation and membership of her string ensemble 'Mutter Virtuosi', describes Wildschut as 'undoubtedly one of the musical hopes of her generation'.

The Dutch virtuoso was only 15 when she signed to Warner Classics last year, and her debut disc is about to appear (we'll be reviewing it next month). Focusing on Mozart, it features both chamber and concerto works ('two sides of Mozart – and also two sides of myself', she says), including Mozart's Violin Concerto No 5. Rather neatly, Mutter herself recorded the same concerto on her debut disc, aged 15, with Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic. Wildschut is also the subject of a new film, *A Family Quartet*; premiered



Dutch violinist Noa Wildschut signed to Warner aged just 15

last month at the Netherlands Film Festival and subsequently screened in Dutch cinemas, the documentary explores the impact of her talent and developing career on her and her family over a three-year period.

## GRAMOPHONE Online

The magazine is just the beginning. Visit [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk) for ...

### Podcasts

The *Gramophone* Podcast is a fascinating free series of interviews with leading classical musicians and composers that you can stream or download from the *Gramophone* website or iTunes. This month, the acclaimed Jonas Kaufmann (pictured) talks about his new French aria collection, 'L'Opéra', on Sony.



The German tenor was at the Royal Opera House in London to sing his first *Otello*, and James Jolly went to talk to him about the recording and his passion for singing in French. Another recent podcast includes an interview with Brian Elias, who composed the music for Kenneth MacMillan's last ballet, *The Judas Tree*, to be revived later this month.

### Reviews Database

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# IN THE STUDIO

Violinist **Vilde Frang** was recording Bartók's Violin Concerto No 1 last month with Mikko Franck and the Orchestre philharmonique de Radio France. For the rest of the recording, due for release in May next year on Warner Classics, Frang will team up with seven other players for Enescu's Octet, to be recorded later in October ● Sebastian Fagerlund's opera *Höstsonaten*, based on the Bergman film, was recorded for BIS last month. Performed by the **Orchestra of Finnish National Opera** and **John Storgårds**, and featuring a cast headed by **Anne Sofie von Otter**, the recording is due for release towards the end of next year ●

Pianist **Xiayin Wang** was recording a Granados recital last month at the American Academy of Arts in NYC. The disc will be released on Chandos in February ● Organist **Joseph Nolan** was at the Grote Kerk in the Dutch city of Haarlem at the end of September, recording Buxtehude, Bach and Mendelssohn for Signum Classics. He was playing the famous Müller organ, and the results will be released towards the end of next year ● **Renaud Capuçon** is about to record Bartók's Violin Concertos Nos 1 and 2 at LSO St Luke's with the LSO and François-Xavier Roth. The recording is due out on Erato in March 2018.

## STUDIO FOCUS *Edward Gardner*

The conductor has been recording Bartók in Bergen with James Ehnes, for a Chandos release out later this year

### What pieces on the album did you record most recently?

We had already recorded the *Concerto for Orchestra*, but we went back to Bergen in the summer to record the *Dance Suite* plus the two Violin Rhapsodies with James Ehnes. We were looking for a similar sound between the *Suite* and the *Concerto*, and Ralph Couzens managed to find a set-up that was upfront and sounded just right. Brian Pidgeon produces all my discs – we have a wonderful relationship – and John Cooper does the engineering afterwards. I love Chandos's ethos, which is to get as close to a performance as possible – a recording shouldn't be a clinical document. I've gradually moved away from thinking that it has to be your final thoughts on what a piece is – it's a snapshot of how you feel about something on that day.

### How did the sessions pan out?

We had performed all the pieces in concert so by the time we turned up we were ready to go. Brian has directed me to a particular way of working, which is that we'll do a little rehearsal and then a big take, which we'll listen to straight away. At the time I'll always be pushing for more and more takes but retrospectively we probably end up using earlier ones, although you can never predict

the moment when it all suddenly comes together. The most important thing in any recording is that I'm part of a team. If anyone in the orchestra is playing a solo they'll come into the booth and listen, but most of the time it's about an unspoken relationship between myself and Brian – he has a wonderful way of keeping me performing and making music, without being too analytical.

### You have worked with James Ehnes before ...

We recorded the Walton Viola Concerto in London, and then the next day we flew to Bergen and he recorded the two Bartók Rhapsodies on the violin. To say he is technically extraordinary sounds like faint praise – he's a brilliant, thoughtful, inspirational musician and during the sessions we were both on the same page.

### How did the editing work?

We all got sent the edits by John, the engineer. There were moments when I had



Committed: conductor Edward Gardner listens to playbacks in Bergen

to say to him, after listening, 'Let's find a take from earlier in the day' – I could almost sense the furrowed brows! Perfection is one thing, but you have to keep the music alive. The one thing I battle with, within myself, is how my interpretation might have changed between the recording and the editing. It could be the smallest thing – just one chord that is different to how I'd approach it now – but it can be quite traumatic to hear it back. I have to shut myself up if that happens!



Duelling in harmony: Gabetta and Bartoli

## Cecilia Bartoli duels with Sol Gabetta

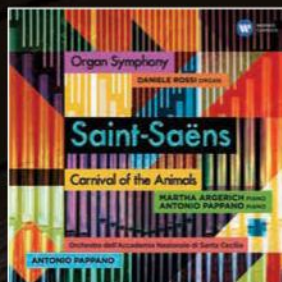
Cecilia Bartoli's albums – invariably ambitious, thought-provoking projects – are always an event. For her latest Decca Classics release, 'Dolce Duello' and due out on November 10, the mezzo-soprano joins forces with cellist Sol Gabetta. The album features the combination of voice and cello 'duelling' – hence the title – in Baroque

arias by Vivaldi ('Di verde ulivo' from *Tito Manlio*), Handel (*Ode for St Cecilia's Day*) and others; friends Bartoli and Gabetta have also collaborated with a musicologist to bring about world-premiere recordings of works by Porpora and Caldara. The release is accompanied by a European tour with Capella Gabetta under Andrés Gabetta (both of whom feature in the recording).



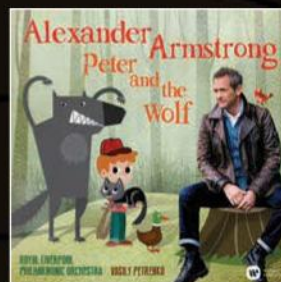
## MARTHA ARGERICH & FRIENDS LIVE FROM LUGANO 2016

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## MARTHA ARGERICH LE CARNAVAL DES ANIMAUX

Martha Argerich with Antonio Pappano (as pianist) in *Carnival of the Animals* with the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia.



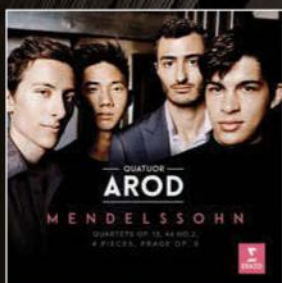
## ALEXANDER ARMSTRONG PETER AND THE WOLF

Alexander Armstrong narrates *Peter and the Wolf*, leading a triptych of music for children including *Carnival of the Animals* and *Practical Cats*.



## PHILIPPE JAROUSKY HANDEL: OPERA ARIAS

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Debut recital from the dazzling young trumpeter, equally at home from Baroque to jazz; with some surprising star-duets guaranteed to enthrall.



## CHRISTINA PLUHAR HANDEL GOES WILD

Christina Pluhar and her ensemble L'Arpeggiata once again embark on some musical time travel, this time with a refreshing new twist on Handel.



## FAZIL SAY CHOPIN: NOCTURNES

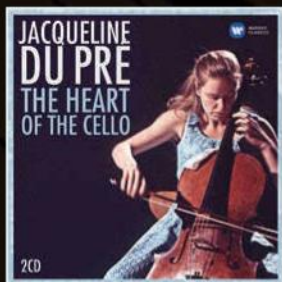
Particularly noted for interpretations of Mozart, Fazil Say now turns to Frederic Chopin, arguably the greatest composer of the 19th century.

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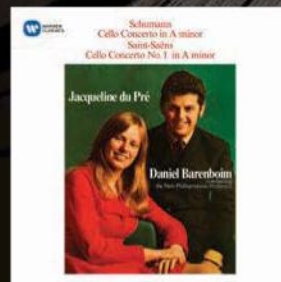
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# ARTISTS & THEIR INSTRUMENTS

## Steven Isserlis on the 'Trench Cello' featured on his latest recording

“I first heard about the 'Trench Cello' in 2013 from the string expert Charles Beare. We were having lunch and he told me about this instrument that had been in his possession since 1964. It had belonged to Lt Harold Triggs, who was an officer in the Royal Sussex Regiment during the First World War. He had acquired a 'holiday cello' of a type made by WE Hill and Sons in around 1900, which he then took to France and played in the trenches. The body is rectangular, Charles explained to me, just as an ammunition box would be; when the instrument travels, he said, the bolt that holds the neck in place is removed and the back slides out so that all the fittings can be placed within the box. I said to Charles, 'I've got to meet this "Trench Cello".' ”

I went down to Kent to try it – Charles was able to assemble it in three minutes! – and fell in love with it immediately. It has a very gentle, slightly nasal sound – it's shyly beautiful. If you blow into the heel of the bow, an 'A' comes out (I can't make it sound, but Charles can).

It was obviously ideal to be carried to the trenches, because it's portable and you can make it up quickly.

It's not an ammunition box (although it looks like one), but it does have the Royal Sussex Regiment's insignia painted on the front. There are some other interesting features, too. Inside the upper end of the back is an inscription written in 1962 by the war poet Edmund Blunden who was also an officer in the Royal Sussex Regiment; it was written when he and Triggs met up again, and recalls the cello and their time together at Ypres. There is also a command for Lt Triggs to play his cello at Chateau Lovie, an army headquarters during the war.

And there are also the signatures of three officers, including Lt Denis H Christie of the Royal Sussex Regiment, dated September 1, 1918;



Steven Isserlis with his 'Trench Cello' at Westminster Abbey in 2014

three weeks later, Lt Christie was killed and Triggs was taken prisoner.

Such a history gets into an instrument. It's like a concert hall – ghosts make a concert hall I think. I played some Bach on it for the World War One centenary in 2014 at Westminster Abbey, which was a very special experience. And then I started thinking about the music Triggs might have played on it, and those ideas led to the repertoire which concludes my new disc, 'The Cello in Wartime'. All the sonatas on the recording – by Debussy, Bridge, Fauré and Webern – were written either just before or during the war and they're all played on my 'Marquis de Coberon' Strad, loaned to me from the Royal Academy of Music. But the final four tracks are played on the 'Trench Cello'.

I did some research about the sort of music that was played in the trenches and the Officers' Mess. I was also guided by the cello itself – you can't play music with violent contrasts on it because the dynamic range is quite narrow, so it's best suited to playing melodies. I thought 'The Swan'

wasn't such a fanciful idea – everyone loves it, and when I played it at the Royal Academy (the first time I'd played the 'Trench Cello' with piano) my girlfriend said she got the impression the cello was very proud. Then there's Parry's 'Jerusalem' – according to a soldier's diary I read, hymns were often performed. 'Keep the Home-Fires Burning' was a popular song back then and I can imagine Triggs playing it to his fellow soldiers. And 'God Save the King' speaks for itself.

The 'Trench Cello' lives with me sometimes, but mostly it's with Charles. I hope I'll continue playing it from time to time because it has a beating heart and I'm very fond of it.”

*'The Cello in Wartime' is released on BIS in November, and will be reviewed in a future issue of Gramophone*

## CBSO receives £800K gift

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra received one of its largest legacies in its 97-year history last month – a massive £800,000, from a frequent, anonymous CBSO concert-goer. The money will be used to support the orchestra's work over an eight-year period, which will include the ensemble's centenary year.

## Stars share their talent for charity

Pianist Boris Giltburg – among this month's Editor's Choices, and author of our Icons feature on Emil Gilels – is among those

performing a Russian-themed concert at the Royal Festival Hall on November 7 in aid of homeless charity The Passage. Then, on January 15, Edward Gardner, Hilary Hahn, the LPO and others will perform Mendelssohn and Tippett in aid of the Refugee Council's Children's Section. Details of both at [southbankcentre.co.uk](http://southbankcentre.co.uk)

## First Grange Festival competition

Some competitions offer money, others record deals, but the Grange Festival International Singing Competition offers a role in a future production at the Hampshire-based festival, plus £7500. The inaugural winner has just been revealed as 27-year-old soprano Rowan Pierce.

# FROM WHERE I SIT

## Shostakovich the subversive: Edward Seckerson on revelations still to be found in his music



**T**he dust may finally have settled on the 2017 Proms season but one strand of programming continues to resonate with me. In commemorating the 1917 Russian Revolution, Vasily Petrenko and Vladimir Jurowski stepped up with stonking performances of both of Shostakovich's revolutionary symphonies.

Jurowski reaffirmed the 11th 'The Year 1905' as the most underrated of the canon and Petrenko read the subtext – or 'script', as he likes to call it – of the hectoring 12th 'The Year 1917' with such ferocious clarity as to make us think that we had been getting this much-maligned piece wrong for years.

But it was a small but mighty concert from the 24-strong Latvian Radio Choir that effectively triggered the process of reassessment in my mind. This powerful rendition of selections from Shostakovich's *Ten Poems on Texts by Revolutionary Poets* for chorus raised a number of interesting questions, not least why the wholesale quotation of revolutionary songs across both the aforementioned symphonies resonated so much more in the 11th Symphony (celebrating as it does the failed revolution of 1905 when the composer was one year old) than it did in the 12th, his long-awaited and long-averted 'Lenin' Symphony?

The shortest answer to that question is that Shostakovich was an extremely bad liar. The longer answer is that whereas the brutal suppression of the 1905 revolution still unlocked something profoundly personal within him some half a century after the event, celebrating Lenin's idealism while the legacy of Stalin's tyranny still festered was something he could not fully engage with. His heart just wasn't in it.

The 'hidden codings' in Shostakovich's symphonies are much discussed. These often thinly disguised protests were designed to confuse, even hoodwink, the authorities, to deflect criticism and even curry favour from them in Stalin's Soviet Union. How you read them can totally change the way we hear a piece. The coda of the Fifth Symphony is, of course, a case in point: a misread metronome marking making the difference between out-and-out jubilation and merely the illusion of such. In other words, a self-styled *delusion*.

Both the 11th and 12th Symphonies are unapologetically programmatic, revelling in a cinematic sensationalism that has brought some high-minded critics down on them. In both, batteries of percussion beat out thrilling tattoos with lethal precision. But the drama that runs deep in the 11th, culminating in an ambiguous major-minor alarum of bells to shame even Mussorgsky, sounds like mere bluster in the 12th.

But then along comes Petrenko to drive that bombast with such anger and disgust that even the unredeemable coda of the finale – protracted tub-thumping as hollow as it is inconsequential – is suddenly a cry of disgust, an admission that the composer had long since abandoned the idea of celebrating Lenin's idealism with anything other than a heavy heart.

These pieces, and their best interpreters, are still full of surprises.

## OPUS ARTE



OUT IN NOVEMBER

### **NORMA** BELLINI Royal Opera House

Star soprano Sonya Yoncheva sings the towering role of Bellini's Norma – a priestess torn between love and duty – in a timeless tale of love and betrayal. The spectacular production by Alex Ollé stars a superb cast including Joseph Calleja and Brindley Sherratt, while Antonio Pappano conducts.

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OUT IN NOVEMBER

### **THREE TRAGEDIES** SHAKESPEARE Royal Shakespeare Company

Rising star Paapa Essiedu gives a stunning performance in Simon Godwin's *Hamlet*; Antony Sher leads the way as the proud but fatally flawed monarch in Gregory Doran's acclaimed *King Lear*; Iqbal Khan's astonishing and groundbreaking production of *Othello*, featuring Hugh Quarshie in the title role.

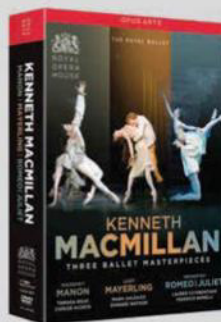
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### **THE NUTCRACKER** TCHAIKOVSKY Royal Opera House

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(Clockwise from top left) Lifetime Achievement recipient Dame Kiri Te Kanawa receives an ovation; Young Artist of the Year Beatrice Rana plays a Liszt transcription of Schumann; Isabelle Faust collects her Concerto and Recording of the Year awards on film; Special Achievement winner Colin Matthews with Sir Mark Elder (right); Dame Kiri's emotive speech



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(Clockwise from top left) Visiting orchestra, the Pan-Armenian Symphony and conductor Sergey Smbatyan; Baroque Vocal winner, countertenor Iestyn Davies, soprano Carolyn Sampson (who collected the Choral Award), and pianist Joseph Middleton perform Purcell; The Tallis Scholars - 1987 Recording of the Year winners - sing Josquin



Baroque Instrumental winner Adrian Chandler; members of the Silesian Quartet collect the Chamber Award



Co-presenter, violinist Jennifer Pike, with Contemporary winner Sir George Benjamin; Early Music winners, viol consort Phantasm; baritone Benjamin Appl sings Millöcker

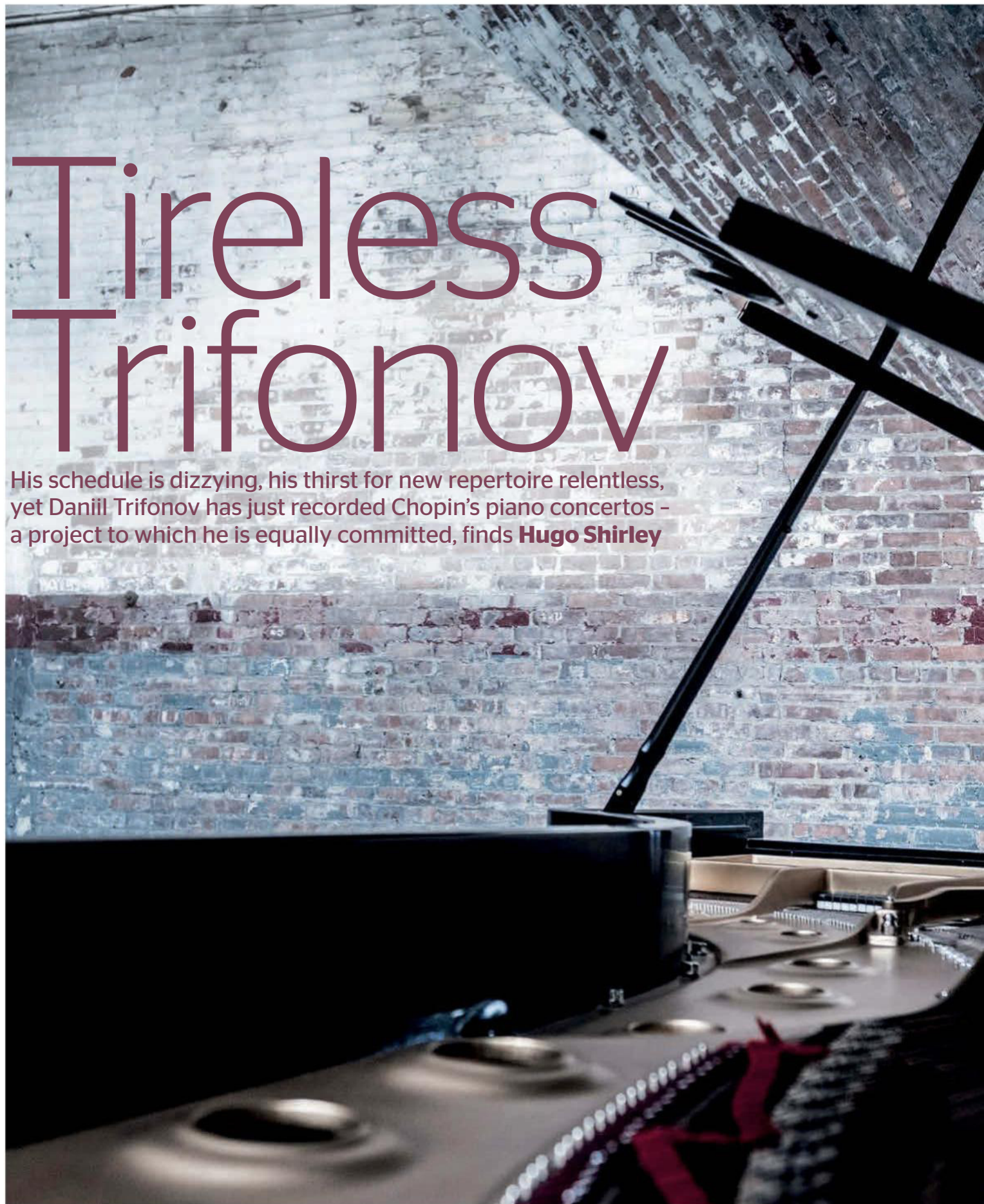


Pianist Murray Perahia receives the Instrumental Award; tenor Mauro Peter collects the Opera Award; actor Julian Ovenden pays glowing tribute to Dame Kiri's long career

PHOTOGRAPHY: BENJAMIN EALOVEGA

# Tireless Trifonov

His schedule is dizzying, his thirst for new repertoire relentless, yet Daniil Trifonov has just recorded Chopin's piano concertos – a project to which he is equally committed, finds **Hugo Shirley**





Here I am, in Dortmund, Germany, in April. It's late morning, and I'm waiting for a break to slip quietly into the city's state-of-the-art Konzerthaus. Through the door I can hear the slow movement of Chopin's Second Piano Concerto: a pianist's languid legato, answered by an unusually plangent bassoon. When I'm let in, I see a casual, slim figure at the piano. Daniil Trifonov – beard, jeans, (untucked) shirt and trainers – looks relaxed, deep in concentration, utterly at ease. And youthful: it's easy to forget that this superstar performer, a growing clutch of critically acclaimed Deutsche Grammophon albums under his belt, is still a good few years off his 30th birthday.

There's not just one great Russian pianist in the hall, though. Sitting in the conductor's chair is the nonchalant figure of Mikhail Pletnev, laconically dispensing pointers to the young players of the Mahler Chamber Orchestra and conversing in Russian with Trifonov between takes. In one of the breaks, he and his younger colleague casually compare notes, rattling off some passagework from one of the finales – 'We were discussing fingering,' Trifonov tells me later.

Pletnev is also there in the capacity of arranger. His tweaked versions of Chopin's two piano concertos form the basis for Trifonov's new project, 'Chopin Evocations', in which they are juxtaposed against repertoire reflecting and responding to the Polish composer. It seems an appropriate starting point: Chopin and his works, the implication seems to be, continue to live, breathe and develop, losing none of their ability to influence subsequent generations.

*'I always associate Chopin with poetry. There is such a sense of breathing in the phrase, which makes it organic'*

It's about this project that Trifonov and I first speak, later on in the day. Or, rather, the evening, for the scheduled interview slot has long been and gone. The sessions overrun by a good hour, but there's no sense in the hall of frayed nerves or frustration – these things simply take as long as they take. The knock-on effect, however, is that interview and dinner become one, with Trifonov, clearly and understandably exhausted after a long day, at first seeming a little dazed at the prospect. Enquiries are made about a suitable venue, and we are chaperoned into a bustling Italian restaurant close to the hall.

In the short walk there, the conversation has already covered the conditioning of the piano and moved on to the Chopin project itself. Trifonov might be tired, but his enthusiasm bubbles irrepressibly to the surface. I remember having read that his favourite subject at school (beyond the demands of his musical studies) was physics, and this has clearly left traces in a fascination for the mechanics of his instrument, as well as the mechanics of playing it.

We get to a table and sit down. My questions are often met with long pauses, then answered in brief, staccato phrases that seem the opposite of the long-spun lines of the Chopin that's still ringing in my ears. With some interviewees one can sense the cogs of a brain whirring. With Trifonov I imagine a mind darting around, gathering up ideas that rarely cease to proliferate.

First we return to the subject of the new Chopin project. 'We've recorded quite a number of pieces and we'll see which ones make it to the final programme, since it might be tight for timing,' he says. It'll be no bad thing then, I think to myself,

PHOTOGRAPH BY: DARIO ACOSTA/DG



Trifonov is presented with the bust of Tchaikovsky by Valery Gergiev after a blistering performance (right) wins him First Prize in the 2011 Tchaikovsky Competition

that the pianist rattled through the concertos' finales at such blistering tempos. The works vying for inclusion on the album (out this month both as a double CD and triple LP) reflect Trifonov's interest in and knowledge of the broader repertoire; the final selection transpires to be an unusual and enticing one.

Alongside the two concertos, there's Chopin's early Variations on 'La ci darem la mano' and the *Fantasia-Improptu*, as well as Federico Mompou's wistful and witty *Chopin Variations* (completed in 1957) and a tantalising quartet of further miniatures – by Schumann, Grieg, Barber and Tchaikovsky – inspired by the composer. But those expecting a Chopinesque equivalent to the *Rachmaniana* Trifonov himself composed for his Gramophone Award-nominated album 'Rachmaninov Variations' might be a little disappointed. Though he's putting the finishing touches to a double concerto for piano and violin for Gidon Kremer, the pianist's busy schedule has recently forced his composing onto the back burner.

The album also includes another Chopin work, the Rondo for two pianos, published posthumously as Op 73, which we hear Trifonov perform with his teacher, Sergei Babayan. 'I discuss my programmes with Sergei Babayan and also the ones that become albums. The Rondo is an infrequently played piece, but it has so much beauty to it.' This will also, Trifonov tells me, represent the first time he's worked together on one of his recording projects with Babayan – whose name crops up repeatedly in our conversation, always given in full – and who, coincidentally, once studied in Moscow with Mikhail Pletnev.

That last point brings us back to the concertos themselves, and to Pletnev's arrangements. The extent of the changes is in many ways limited, Trifonov tells me, and the piano parts themselves are largely unchanged. 'The Second is exactly the same, but in the First there are a couple of spots where there is like a dialogue with piano and orchestra which doesn't exist in the original score. I think the idea is to make it very "concerto-like". There is a lot more conversation happening, but also it's lighter in a way, despite there being more polyphony.'

He describes these versions, with new balances between piano and orchestra, as 'rubato friendly', and throughout the sessions – particularly in the slow movements – I am struck by Trifonov's ability to stretch a melodic line near to breaking point, but never beyond it. How does he manage it? His teachers always placed emphasis on making the piano sing, he explains, adding that there was an important course

on accompanying singers at Moscow's Gnessin School of Music: 'We had exams every year and I think I did it for about seven years; we covered a lot of repertoire for piano and voice.'

'Chopin always has a line,' he continues, before revealing something of his own inner relationship with the music. 'For some reason, I always associate the music of Chopin with poetry – the poetry of Pushkin and Lermontov in the first half of the 19th century. Of course I know it's completely different, but there is such a sense of breathing in the phrase which makes it organic.' Then, in one of his characteristic shifts from the poetical to the practical that pepper our conversation, Trifonov adds: 'You know, it also depends on the piano. The longer the piano is able to sustain the sound, the more time you can allow. If the sound is too short, too brisk, then it immediately becomes much more tricky.'

I ask more generally about the day's session, and the stresses of recording. Trifonov finds the process intense – psychologically and emotionally as much as physically. 'It's not so much

that you have to play for so long; it's also that you have to listen a lot, and it keeps playing in your head afterwards ... I still have in my head the material that I recorded a few days ago in Hamburg.' And there's no less intensity, it seems, when it comes to his engagement with music as a listener more generally. He still plays recordings by his favourite pianists as much as he can – 'Sofronitsky, Rachmaninov, Horowitz, Cortot, Lipatti ... Gieseking ... ah, Schnabel also!' – and he shows an impressive knowledge of Pletnev's own back catalogue.

But he also, he tells me, has a tendency to 'get a fever' with certain composers. There was an early obsession with Scriabin: 'I was reading and listening to almost everything he wrote, and also his symphonies. And also with Chopin. Then it was with Schumann, and more recently with Brahms.' It was perhaps most intense with Schumann, he admits: 'I would be listening to his symphonies, to his piano works, for days and days.' Another time it was Mahler, Trifonov remembers, an obsession which came to a head when he and an orchestra were snowed in on one of the stops of an extended tour: 'Everything was closed and the concert couldn't take place, so for three days I was just listening to one Mahler symphony after another!'

Is that healthy, I ask? I'm half joking, but Trifonov answers in all seriousness: 'It is, because then after that it actually helps with seeing very large shapes. And then when I listen to the Rachmaninov Third Symphony it seems like a very brisk piece!'

*'The Tchaikovsky Competition was an adventure! I was curious about what was happening. I like being in new situations'*



Trifonov performs a fiendish recital programme at Carnegie Hall in 2014

He continues: 'It's very interesting, because your mind adjusts to a different time-flow, you're entering a slightly different state of consciousness, you think differently.'

I wonder once more if that's what helps him to create the long-breathed paragraphs in Chopin I'd heard in the afternoon's sessions. Now it's *his* turn to joke: 'I was maybe sleepy then!' But then he remembers another technique learnt from Babayan: 'It takes a lot of time, but you play a phrase at an extremely slow tempo, even if it's already a slow movement. You start it really *fortissimo* and then gradually lead it towards *pianissimo*, and each time you take little blocks: a couple of bars, the four bars, then an entire phrase.'

Would it be right to suggest, then, that Trifonov's interpretations start with the impossible and step back into the possible, rather than taking the possible itself as a starting point? He pauses. 'That's the right way to put it ... But it's also the way you must have a very personal connection with a score. The more that scores have been lived through, the more detail you pay attention to. It's being sunk in music as if you are in water – being totally absorbed in it.'

There are few composers that Trifonov is more absorbed in than Chopin, of course. He first properly studied the composer's music when he entered the junior version of the International Chopin Piano Competition at the start of his teens, he tells me. But it was his 2010 appearance at the main Chopin Competition in Warsaw – he won Third Prize, but immediately caught the attention of the musical world – that was perhaps the most significant in a competition career that also saw him also walk off with first prizes at both the Tchaikovsky and Rubenstein competitions. The Chopin Competition also came only shortly after Trifonov moved to the States, to begin his studies with Babayan at the Cleveland Institute of Music. 'I had little over a year to prepare. Of course he wanted first to get more understanding, so I brought him the Third Piano Sonata on our first lesson. After that he thought maybe I could try.'

'It was very stressful,' he continues. 'It was the first competition of that intensity in which I'd participated, where there were, like, 60 pianists in the first round. In the first round you had only 20-25 minutes – a very limited time – to make an impression.' This stress never seems to have been converted into doubt, however. 'I was very curious about what was happening. It was a kind of adventure for me! I like being in new situations, like when there's a new piano and you have to get used to it. A lot of it was spontaneous.'

His main memory of the Tchaikovsky Competition now seems to be of the temperature in the newly reopened

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Daniil Trifonov © Paolo Youssef



Recording 'Chopin Evocations': Trifonov with conductor Mikhail Pletnev, whose arrangements of the Chopin piano concertos feature on the disc, and the Mahler CO

Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatoire. It was 'a crazy hot summer', he says. 'I remember the amount of sweat, in the final rounds especially!' For the Tchaikovsky, there was the extra pressure of playing in his adopted home city, as well as the additional stress of coming to it directly after the Rubinstein Competition and its subsequent Gala Tour for the winners. 'It was really non-stop, so after this month-and-a-half, I was pretty well not able to understand what was happening!'

I try to take us further back in time and steer the conversation towards Trifonov's prodigious early years, but he is not especially quick to volunteer information. At the time I ascribe this to tiredness and a certain fatigue at no doubt having had to cover this ground in dozens of interviews over the years. On reflection, I wonder if it is as much to do with Trifonov being disarmingly unaware of the exceptional nature of his story. He admits instead that he never really decided that the piano was the instrument he was destined for: he was equally drawn to the trumpet at an early age, he tells me, not least because of the trumpet parts of Scriabin's orchestral music.

He doesn't volunteer the story about the concerto debut aged eight, during which, as the story goes, he lost a milk tooth. He underplays, too, the significance of moving with his parents – both musicians – to Moscow shortly afterwards to begin studies with Tatiana Zelikman at the Gnessin School (or Gnessin State Musical College, to give it its formidable full title), where he undertook a full school syllabus alongside his intensive music studies. Zelikman would be his teacher for the next eight years, a legendary figure whom he has credited, through her extensive record collection, with greatly broadening his musical horizons.

There remains a clear sense that Trifonov is constantly looking to further broaden those horizons today, to look beyond the barnstorming repertoire that has cemented his reputation. (His DG discography includes not only 'Rachmaninov

Variations' but also 'Transcendental', a blistering survey, likewise nominated for a *Gramophone* Award, of Liszt's studies. There's more to come along those lines, too, given that Trifonov is recording half a Rachmaninov concerto cycle with Yannick Nezet-Séguin and the Philadelphia Orchestra.) This is clearly an artist who thrives on forever seeking out new musical challenges. His last album, 'Elegy', featured Rachmaninov – but the trios rather than more overtly virtuosic repertoire. 'Chopin Evocations', meanwhile, will be swiftly followed by the release of an all-star recording of Schubert's *Trout* Quintet with, among others, Anne-Sophie Mutter. In the concert hall, there are further projects with the baritone Matthias Goerne, more trio projects, and a recital of 20th-century repertoire. This month he plays Strauss's *Burleske* with Mariss Jansons in Munich, and he's clearly eyeing up Stravinsky's Concerto for Piano and Wind as well. Then, he tells me, there are works by Corigliano, Adams and Adès on the agenda, as well as a new Double Concerto being written for Trifonov and Babayan by Italian-born composer Mauro Lanza.



'There are moments when it feels like there is too much': Trifonov pictured in a rare moment of contemplation




Listening to takes, with the recording's producer Sid McLaughlan

It's a dizzying timetable, both in terms of the amount of performing and the variety of repertoire. He warns of the dangers of overexertion – 'There are certain moments when it feels like there is too much and it can be damaging to the involvement in the music' – but I sense he's no happier than when being kept this busy. And there's a telling comment earlier in our conversation when I ask about the stress of competitions, and whether or not he ever had concerns about his choice of such an exacting career. 'I didn't plan too much. I enjoyed myself. I was more concerned with solving current problems.'

*'You must have a personal connection with a score. It's being sunk in music as if you are in water – being totally absorbed'*

And it's an ability to think objectively about 'problems' that helps Trifonov maintain a punishing schedule today. One of his primary solutions is an innovative attitude towards piano technique and the player's physical relationship to the keyboard, one more element of his arsenal that he credits to Babayan. The ideal, he says, is to remove tension and achieve flexibility – there should be 'no bones, like an octopus'. Descriptions of Trifonov crouching, apparently uncomfortably, at the keyboard are misleading too. He adopts different postures depending on the composer and the sort of touch each demands, he explains. 'The piano is quite an unnatural instrument in terms of position and you have to force yourself into a very unnatural state. One of the ways to avoid physical exhaustion is to minimise the tension by increasing the fluidity. I say you need to look at the way animals move: there's always a fluidity there.'


Elsewhere in interviews Trifonov has said he uses yoga and ancient Chinese breathing techniques to aid relaxation, and has admitted to 'practising' in a swimming pool to increase finger strength. At the recording session I notice him practising in the longer breaks with what looks like insulation tape wrapped around his fingers. 'It's a kind of express warm-up,' he explains, moving his slender, long-fingered hands around to demonstrate how it restrains some joints and muscles while helping to encourage more movement in others. 'But you have to be careful with it ... the swimming pool is much safer.'  *Trifonov's Chopin recording is reviewed on page 57*

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# *Birthday* BEETHOVEN

Recording Beethoven's Sonatas for Violin and Piano is a significant achievement for Chloë Hanslip and Danny Driver, heightened by their personal milestones of turning 30 and 40 respectively – but it's the music, not the numbers, that excites this duo the most, finds **Charlotte Gardner**



There's something about 'complete cycle' recording projects that always feels particularly special. The act of complete absorption in one specific and entire chunk of a composer's oeuvre; what that means in terms of an artist's relationship with that composer; and also what it says about the artist in question, in relation to his or her own musical maturity.

The degrees of all the above will then usually vary depending on the artist and project in question. However, it must be said that with Chloë Hanslip and Danny Driver's complete Beethoven cycle of Sonatas for Violin and Piano, recorded live for Rubicon over three recitals at Southampton's Turner Sims Hall, there's an overwhelming sense of all of those elements coming strongly into play.

Firstly in terms of age milestones, because the project neatly coincides both with Hanslip's 30th birthday and with Driver's 40th. Furthermore, whilst 30 is still relatively young in career terms for many solo artists, Hanslip has in fact been on the

professional performance circuit for almost 20 years, thanks to a prodigious talent that saw her, in 2001 aged just 13, become the youngest ever artist to sign with Warner Classics.

Another significant factor regarding Hanslip is that it's actually been a fair old while since she's recorded such core repertoire. While her first two releases with the London Symphony Orchestra on Warner presented well-known crowd-pleasers (the 2001 recording comprised popular shorts such as Shostakovich's *The Gadfly*, and the 2002 disc featured Bruch's Violin Concertos Nos 1 and 3), her subsequent projects have moved in a different direction. For Naxos and then Hyperion, Hanslip has embraced far more specialist repertoire: Benjamin Godard, Antonio Bazzini, Jenő Hubay, York Bowen and Nikolai Medtner have been just some of the composers explored in recent years.

So, all in all, this new Beethoven project feels somewhat momentous, yet when I sit down with Hanslip and Driver to ask how it came about, they're remarkably matter-of-fact about the entire thing.

*'It's not always about making the most beautiful sound, I find – some of the writing is quite violent' – Chloë Hanslip*

'I think it came quite naturally, didn't it?' says Hanslip cheerily, glancing towards Driver as she does so for assent (and indeed the two turn out to be just as much of an interview duo as an onstage one, bouncing off each other's comments and watching for each other's reactions). 'We'd been doing the Beethoven sonatas in recital programmes, and people kept on asking if we had plans to record them. Then we went to play at the Turner Sims, and its Concert Manager Kevin Appleby asked us what we wanted to perform there next. So with the music already in our programme it grew from there.'

'Yes,' says Driver, taking up the thread, 'and the idea of recording them then followed because the Turner Sims is a good venue to record in; very intimate, a good sound, and the piano is lovely. So it just seemed as though all arrows converged.' He then adds: 'There's no sense that anything is definitive though. If we were to record it again in 20 years' time or even next week it would be totally different, because that's the richness of the text and its possibilities. So inasmuch as it's always going to be a snapshot, why not? It's a great opportunity.'

As for the contents of this particular 'snapshot', my impression upon attending the first of their three recitals was of a light, energetic, period-aware performance, made all the more enjoyable for the way in which Hanslip and Driver were clearly sparking off each other as they went. Also noteworthy was Hanslip's lack of fear at digging into her instrument at times to find a more aggressive sound – an approach she confirms as we chat. 'It's not always about making the most beautiful sound, I find,' she muses. 'Some of the writing is quite violent – some of the *sforzandos* and the accents – so I'm trying to bring that out. Equally, when the music requires a slightly more grounded sound, I'm trying to find that.' She continues: 'I was also deliberately trying not to put any of my own imprint on it. Instead, it was just hours and hours of trying to study exactly what was in the score, and making sure that I was following the markings and the phrasings that Beethoven writes, in a way that makes sense. For instance sometimes he writes a long legato line which looks almost impossible to do, but that's the phrasing that he wanted.'

Driver then interjects: 'There's also something in this project about the way Beethoven is commonly perceived by a general audience, which is based mostly around either heroic or epic works, or slightly mystic or philosophical late works, whereas these violin sonatas are earlier. Most of them were written between 1798 and 1803, and as such they speak of a very different kind of Beethoven. There's a little humour, a lot of charm, a lot of Beethoven the aspiring young composer wanting to impress his superiors: the dedication to Salieri in the first three, and the alarmingly virtuosic "Look at what I can do" piano writing. So I think what makes our approach individual is just that we're finding a very honest response to the music, going back to the text of the time as much as possible, and at the same time being very alive in today's time. I'd say it's partly scholarly and partly intuitive.'

Driver's thoughts have also been encompassing how to translate the works into the sound world and capabilities of his modern Steinway. 'With Beethoven there are so many markings that are so specifically geared to the instruments of the time, that they need to be completely reconsidered when you're playing a modern piano,' he says. 'Even things like *forte* versus *piano*, because the dynamic range Beethoven was thinking of was much narrower. So although the contrasts are on the one hand very palpable, they're much less to do with the dynamic level itself than with character possibilities or dialogue. Similarly, as you go up the scale on a piano of that period, the sound just disappears, meaning that when Beethoven marks a huge crescendo on a line travelling upwards to the top of the keyboard, it was probably



Dream team: the duo first collaborated on a York Bowen CD

*'I think what makes our approach individual is just that we're finding a very honest response to the music' – Danny Driver*

now was a good time to do them. I'm sure that I'll want to do them again, though, and that in 20 years' time it will also feel like a good time.'

Hanslip's 'big 3-0' does feel significant to onlookers though. Including myself, because my own first sight of her was all the way back in 2001, when she was kneeling on the floor of a BBC radio studio as she lifted her violin from its case for an interview about the Warner signing. This is a memory that has lingered because, even while

wondering whether this 13-year-old would last the distance or simply be a child-prodigy-shaped flash in the pan, I'd been struck by her calm composure and the maturity of her playing. Likewise her appearance two years previously as a child-prodigy violinist in Martha Fiennes's 1999 film adaptation of *Onegin*,

because she'd similarly come across not as a child performer simply trotting out what she'd been taught by rote, but as a young musician passionately absorbed in what she was doing.

But how, I ask her now, has it felt from her perspective? 'It's been extraordinary,' she enthuses. 'To have the experience of standing in front of the LSO in their studios when you're 13, and the same with the Bruch when I was 14, was mind-boggling. I've had so many wonderful experiences. I've studied abroad. I've played chamber music with so many wonderful musicians. I just feel like I've had an incredibly rich time.'



Both Driver and Hanslip speak of a passion for interpreting the true musical intentions of Beethoven's original markings

And what about the 'child prodigy' label, I ask. Is that something she identifies with, or has it been something she's consciously had to transition away from?

'I have to say that I never thought of myself as a prodigy or a *wunderkind* or anything like that,' she comments. 'I was doing what I loved. My parents often said to me, "If you want to give up tomorrow that's fine, we don't mind", so it was very much led by me. I certainly never thought of myself as having to transition from being a child prodigy into an adult performer either, although there were times when I wasn't necessarily doing as many concerts or recordings but was instead just focusing. But I just think it all happened quite organically. Or at least I hope it did!'

It was a complete York Bowen cycle of works for violin and piano on Hyperion that first brought Hanslip and Driver together six years ago, and Driver is eloquent as to why they work so well as a duo despite their 10-year age gap. 'When I first met Chloë she was in her earlier twenties and I was in my earlier thirties,' he says. 'However, I couldn't by any stretch say that I'd had more experience than her, because whereas I'd come to performing having first done a science degree, she'd been doing the international touring circuit since she was about 12.' He continues: 'We also bring different approaches. Being a scientist by training means that I tend to analyse things a lot. Chloë meanwhile is more instinctive. So I hope I've become more instinctive over the years as a result', to which Hanslip responds, 'Whereas I would say I have become more analytical!'

So what do they want listeners to hear in their Beethoven? 'I hope that they will hear dialogue and vibrancy,' Hanslip says. 'And also that they just hear Beethoven and what he wrote.' **G**  
*Hanslip and Driver's Beethoven recording will be reviewed next issue*

## RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

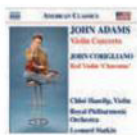
Get acquainted with Hanslip and Driver on disc



**Bruch** Violin  
Concertos Nos 1 & 3.  
**Sarasate** Navarra  
Chloë Hanslip *vn*  
London Symphony

Orchestra / Martyn Brabbins  
Warner Classics (10/02)

The meatier and enthusiastically reviewed follow-up to her debut disc of classical shorts, this was an Editor's Choice in 2002.



**John Adams** Violin  
Concerto **John**  
**Corigliano** Red  
Violin - Chaconne  
Chloë Hanslip *vn*

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra /  
Leonard Slatkin  
Naxos (09/06)

Hanslip's first recording for Naxos for which she was praised in these pages for displaying a degree of empathy with Adams's concerto that considerably outplayed the premiere recording by Gidon Kremer.



**Jenő Hubay**  
Violin Concertos  
Nos 1 & 2; Scenes de  
la Csarda Nos 3 & 4  
Chloë Hanslip *vn*

Bournemouth Symphony  
Orchestra / Andrew Mogrelia  
Naxos (09/09)

Performances which bring sweetness and spark to this little-known Hungarian composer Hubay's blend of Brahmsian romance, French panache and Hungarian spice.



**York Bowen**  
The Complete Works  
for Violin and Piano  
Chloë Hanslip *vn*  
Danny Driver *pf*

Hyperion (05/13)

Bowen's challenging chamber writing, spanning the years between 1900 and 1949, is brought to infectious and virtuosic life through a palpably joyful new duo partnership.

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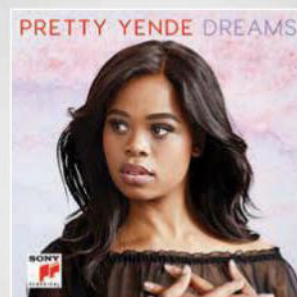
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Sampson, Davies and Middleton have a natural rapport, which made recording sessions at Potton Hall (facing page) all the more enjoyable

# Friends reunited in song

When Carolyn Sampson, Iestyn Davies and Joseph Middleton came together to record a disc of songs for BIS it was a meeting of hearts as well as minds, discovers **Lindsay Kemp**

**T**rying to capture on paper an interview with three people in one go is no easy task. When they are people who know and work with each other well, it's even harder. They may all talk at the same time, for instance. One of them might finish off what another is saying, or somebody's sentence will trail off into glances, smiles or even downright raucous laughter as yet another attempt at seriousness gets taken down.

So it is with soprano Carolyn Sampson, countertenor Iestyn Davies and pianist Joseph Middleton, who I meet up with to talk about the relationship that grew into, and out of, their new CD for BIS. Called 'Lost is my Quiet', it contains vocal duets by Purcell/Britten (including 'Sound the trumpet' and 'No, resistance is but vain'), Mendelssohn (including texts by Heine and Eichendorff, and the Three Duets Op 77), Schumann (his Op 43 Duets and Rückert's 'So wahr die Sonne scheint') and

Quilter (two Elizabethan texts and a duet originally for soprano and tenor from the opera *Rosme*). Thus a simple question along the lines of 'How did the project come together?' gets an answer like this:

**Sampson:** 'As you can see, we hate each other' (all laugh).

**Middleton:** 'And we practised at least twice!' (all laugh some more).

**Sampson:** 'Well, Joe and I were talking in the car on the way home from the recording session for our "Fleurs" CD, wondering about what to do next ...'

**Davies:** '... and Joe said, "Time to work with someone else". You know, like if you're giving up smoking or something: introduce another singer and then gradually drop Carolyn' (all laugh again, this time longer and louder).

**Sampson** (more serious, attempting a 'reset'): 'So, it all came from chit-chat in the car after a recording session ...'

**Davies:** '... Yes, you ran your ear over a few countertenors and I was the only one available!' (another good laugh for all).



*'You get an idea of what voices suit what, and what temperaments suit particular texts. It's just general geekery really' – Joseph Middleton*

You get the picture, I think. Clearly these are three musicians who get on as friends. Eventually, though, I do manage to get more sustained answers out of them that don't involve mutual ribbing. 'Hopefully what people will hear is that Iestyn and I duet together really naturally and comfortably', says Sampson, 'and that with the three of us together it's very much chamber music, a nice thing to do.'

The Middleton-Sampson partnership began five years ago with a recital in Bedford, Sampson's hometown where Middleton also happened to be running a concert series, and since then has resulted in two lovingly programmed and well-received recital discs for BIS – a wide-ranging themed collection entitled 'Fleurs' and, more recently, 'A Verlaine Songbook'. Davies's first concert with Middleton was at Pembroke College, Cambridge, in 2014, but he had already sung with Sampson on numerous occasions in Baroque opera and oratorio, a repertoire that frequently brings solo singers together in ensemble.

'We've both sung with many different singers in Handel and stuff', says Davies, 'and there are always people it really works with, so that other people say "Wow, you two sound really good together!" But you just know when you're standing next to somebody who you won't even have to look at because you can feel when you're both going to take a breath or do a trill.' ('Or use the same amount of vibrato,' Sampson chips in.) Davies continues: 'Part of the fun when Carolyn and I came to this recording was that we had similar memories of German

coaching and were both laughing at certain bits, and then after that we were laughing because we knew we were *about* to laugh. I think you can hear in certain places on the recording that we were smiling at least – they're the takes we managed not to

laugh on! For me that's testimony to the invisible thread you can feel between two people.'

Middleton certainly noticed that at the recording. 'The ensemble between them was freakily good, and the way they coloured their voices was also similar. There are some excellent singers out there who have different speeds and types of vibrato; there's no right or wrong in that, but when you have two singers who can express their voices in the same manner it really does sound better.'

The relationship a singer has with his or her accompanist is no less important. Sampson and Middleton clearly hit it off from the start, and while Davies has done less work with piano so far, both singers have close working partnerships with lutenists in their busy early-music lives – Sampson with Matthew Wadsworth and

Davies with Thomas Dunford. 'I think finding a good recital partner is just knowing that it fits,' says Sampson. 'It's partly luck, partly being on the same wavelength musically, and partly having a temperament that makes it fun to make music. These are the people with whom you want to continue working.' Davies joins in: 'If you find yourself missing that person when you're doing something else, that's a sign. Thomas was doing a lute recital recently where I came on for a surprise encore at the end, and he said afterwards it was so good to have me back because I was someone to share the burden of being on stage with, so that suddenly he could relax and enjoy it.'

Of course, any accompanist needs to be a good listener and observer too. 'It's about adapting to people,' says Middleton. 'The interesting thing is figuring out how a singer likes to work. It's easy if they already know that themselves. Some like to rehearse a lot, and I love that too. Some don't, and that's fine as well, as long as they "get it" themselves. Some are looking for an accompanist who's more like a coach and, at least some of the time, telling them what they think; and some arrive having sung these songs for 40 years, and then it's great to learn from them. But once you're on stage it needs to feel like you're on a par, even if the singer is a complete legend.' (Cue sniggering from the others here.) Middleton continues: 'Ultimately you have to put a song across in the best light as a *duo*.'

Another part of the singer-accompanist relationship is the joy of jointly compiling a programme, and quite often it is the accompanist who makes the initial steps, as Sampson



(Above and facing page) Davies and Sampson relax between takes at Pottton Hall while Middleton practises; (below) the three artists at this year's Gramophone Awards

acknowledges. 'I'd just like to say here that Joe is the absolute king of programming. He's really good at coming up with interesting programmes, at suggesting a basic idea and shape and then pulling some songs together. After that it's about us tweaking and working out what's actually going to fit.' Middleton accepts the compliment, though not without adding that 'it would be the same if Carolyn or Iestyn were going to programme, say, a Bach cantata series. It's a case of what you know. I spend my whole life playing songs and can keep on adding lists of songs to the memory bank. You also get an idea of what voices suit what, and what temperaments suit particular texts. It's just general geekery really.'

General laughter enters the room at this point, but once this has subsided we manage some discussion of the process by which this recital was put together. 'Purcell was the obvious starting point', says Middleton, 'because that's what Carolyn and Iestyn are famous for. And using Britten's arrangements allows the piano to get involved as well. In a way they're as much Britten's songs as Purcell's because he totally reinvented them, and the piano accompaniments add a touch of theatricality that you might not always get with a period performance.' ('Careful!' warns Sampson). Davies prefers to describe Britten's interpretation as 'bringing the songs to life



with a modern touch. It means that some of the ornamentation we did in "Sound the trumpet", for example, was spontaneous to the recording, but not something we'd naturally do if we were singing with a harpsichord. With the piano added, we were able to go with the sort of heavy velvet curtain that Britten puts around Purcell.' 'We liked the idea of bookending the Mendelssohn and Schumann with English music,' Middleton adds.

'I really love those Quilter songs, which are quite different from the Schumann and Mendelssohn, who in turn treat duets quite differently from each other: Schumann's are more a case of two individual voices saying their own thing and interweaving, while Mendelssohn's are more like ensembles; both of them have this lightness of touch that really suits these guys' voices.' (A mutter from Davies: "Non-legends" you mean.)

If all this leads you to imagine that the recording itself was a relaxed business, all three of our musicians are happy to confirm that indeed it was, and that this mood contributed greatly to the occasion. The venue was Pottton Hall in Suffolk, just around the corner from Aldeburgh, an area associated (at least as far as Middleton's concerned) with



*'At Potton Hall there's no structure on the timing, which makes it much more relaxed – that and the fact that there's a jacuzzi' – Iestyn Davies*

'Britten, fish and chips, beer, the beach ...' For Davies, 'One bonus of working at Potton Hall is that there's no structure on the timing, because you can sleep in the room next door to the studio if you want. It also meant that we could say to Jens Braun, our producer, "Can we do this song in an hour?" and take a rest. That all makes it much more relaxed, and you can then focus on exactly what you want to do at a particular time. That and the fact that there's a jacuzzi there.'

Sampson tries one last time to inject some seriousness. 'What's important to stress with this disc is that we're just enjoying the music – it's very much about the music-making and fun. We do our historically worthy things the rest of the time, and that's not what this is. It's just us having fun with the music, and when you're listening you should end up with the feeling that Carolyn, Iestyn and Joe have got round the piano one evening after a bottle of wine and had some fun.' 'Yes, it's light music in the best possible way,' concurs Davies, before adding: 'Actually, recording it after a bottle of wine, that *would* be fun!' I think you'll know by now what follows *that* remark. **G**

► 'Lost is my Quiet' will be reviewed in the next issue of Gramophone

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# WINTER FESTIVAL

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## GUIDE 2017/18

*Gramophone is proud to present its first ever Winter Festival Guide, bringing you the most exciting and innovative music events between now and March 2018 from the UK, Europe and beyond*

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## UK FESTIVALS

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### BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL PIANO FESTIVAL

#### October 27 - November 4

Now in its third year, this festival brings some of the world's finest pianists and keyboard players to the city of Birmingham. Performances take place in the University of Birmingham's concert halls: the Bramall Music Building and The Barber Institute of Fine Arts. The 2017 edition opens with a relaxed lunchtime lecture recital from Professor Kenneth Hamilton on the development of the piano, where he will play and discuss the Steinway Concert Grand, an 1851 Erard, the fortepiano, harpsichord and clavichord. The festival includes Benjamin Grosvenor performing the music of Bach, Brahms, Ravel, Dean and others, and harpsichordist Steven Devine performing with the European Union Chamber Orchestra.

[birminghampianofestival.com](http://birminghampianofestival.com)



Benjamin Grosvenor, Gramophone's Young Artist of the Year in 2012, performs Bach, Brahms and Ravel in Birmingham

### Autumn in Malvern Festival September 23 - October 31

This multi-arts festival situated in the Malvern Hills offers more than five weeks of events and exhibitions, attracting some big names. Highlights for 2017 include Kazuki Yamada conducting the BBC National Orchestra of Wales at the University of Worcester Arena, in a programme including Bruch's Violin Concerto No 1 with soloist Hyeyoon Park. Another is a Great Malvern Priory performance from the Sacconi Quartet along with tenor Mark Padmore and pianist Freddie Brown, that includes the world premiere of Alec Roth's festival commission, a song cycle for tenor and string quartet on poems by Edward Thomas. The morning before the premiere,

Roth will deliver an illustrated talk about his creative processes.

[malvernfestival.co.uk](http://malvernfestival.co.uk)

### Barnes Music Festival

#### March 10-25, 2018

Now in its sixth year, this west London festival's theme for 2018 is 'Peace & Harmonies', reflecting the centenary of the end of the First World War. Twenty-five events at eight venues across Barnes feature a mix of international and local artists, and everything from orchestral, choral and opera, to chamber and jazz. Artists making appearances this year include organists Martin Neary and James McVinney, choral director Ralph Allwood, pianist Lucy Parham, composer Howard Goodall and the comic and actor Alistair McGowan. Also worth noting is that

the Barnes Young Musician of the Year competition is back for a second year.

[barnesmusicfestival.com](http://barnesmusicfestival.com)

### Bath Bachfest

#### February 22-24, 2018

Incorporating five concerts over three days at venues including Bath's Georgian Assembly Rooms and Bath Abbey, Bath Bachfest accurately describes itself as a 'small but perfectly formed midwinter mini-festival celebrating the music of JS Bach and his Baroque contemporaries'. Full details and tickets will be available from November. Given that last year's edition included performances from the Academy of Ancient Music and The Sixteen, we are confident that this will be

a festival where you can expect to hear top international artists.

[bathbachfest.co.uk](http://bathbachfest.co.uk)

### Chiltern Arts Festival

#### February 3-11, 2018

The inaugural Chiltern Art Festival brings fine musicians to the Chiltern Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and surroundings. Highlights include Tenebrae singing Russian choral music in Marlow, Tasmin Little giving a mixed recital in Great Missenden, and Mozart and Mendelssohn from the City of London Sinfonia at Dorchester Abbey.

[chilternarts.com](http://chilternarts.com)

### EFG London Jazz Festival

#### November 10-19

Celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, the EFG London Jazz Festival

presents 10 days of performances from both emerging stars and world-class artists. Among those on the bill for 2018 are Henri Texier, Bill Larence, Andy Sheppard Quartet, and Chris Thile and Brad Mehldau.

[efglondonjazzfestival.org.uk](http://efglondonjazzfestival.org.uk)

### Muffat Festival

**February 23-25, 2018**

This weekend festival at St John's Smith Square, curated and led by The Brook Street Band, uses four concerts, a dance workshop and illustrated talks to delve into the world of Georg Muffat (1653-1704). Works performed include music from his *Armonico tributo*, along with a selection from the two volumes of the groundbreaking strings collection *Florilegium*.

[sjss.org.uk](http://sjss.org.uk)

### London A Cappella Festival

**January 24-27, 2018**

Based at Kings Place, this lively festival always feels like one of the hidden-gem highlights of London's musical year, with its mix of top national and international *a cappella* groups. It's also notable for its mix of genres and performance types – repertoire runs the gamut from pop to classical, and the main ticketed events are supported by free foyer performances. As we went to press the confirmed headline acts were The Tallis Scholars and The Swingles. No doubt the rest of the programme will be just as tempting when it's announced.

[londonacappellafestival.com](http://londonacappellafestival.com)

### London Handel Festival

**March 17 - April 16, 2018**

Themed 'Handel in London', the 2018 festival's walks, talks and concerts explore his wider entrepreneurial and philanthropic life in Georgian society. Performances range from opera and grand oratorio to more intimate chamber music concerts, and highlights include celebratory anniversary performances of two works that Handel composed during his 1718 residency at Cannons: a semi-staged *Acis and Galatea* and a concert performance of *Esther*. The London Handel Orchestra plays for both, and also for the rarely heard oratorio *The Triumph of Time and Truth* (HWV71) under Laurence Cummings. Other highlights include concert versions of *Amadigi* (Opera Settecento), *Teseo* (La Nuova Musica) and *Giulio Cesare* (Early Opera Company). The prestigious Handel Singing Competition also returns, now in its 16th year.

[london-handel-festival.com](http://london-handel-festival.com)

### Principal Sound Festival

**February 16-18, 2018**

Following a critically acclaimed investigation of the music of Morton Feldman in 2016, Principal Sound

## Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival

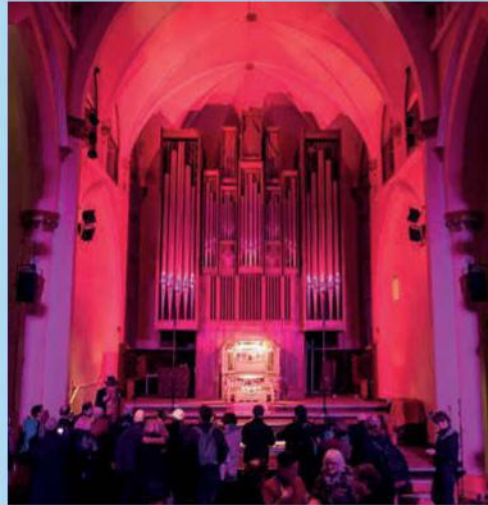
**November 17-25**

Self-billed as 'the UK's largest international festival of new and experimental music', this year's 40th edition offers, over 10 days, 50 events: concerts, music theatre, dance, multimedia, talks and

film – alongside an integrated learning and participation programme. Highlights include the world premiere of a work by James Dillon, the UK premiere of a suite by Brian Ferneyhough and a recently completed piece by Rolf Hind.

Artists include Red Note, the Arditti Quartet, and Ensemble Modern. Young British composers are also represented, and classic rock scores by Lou Reed, Kraftwerk and Brian Eno are revisited.

[hcmf.co.uk](http://hcmf.co.uk)



St Paul's Hall and Huddersfield's Town Hall host 'the UK's largest international festival of new and experimental music'

returns to St John's Smith Square for three days of concerts pairing more of his visionary music with a number of late masterpieces by Luigi Nono. Expect some of contemporary music's most respected ensembles along with the UK's most exciting young talent, and the opportunity to be immersed in the contemplative works of these two giants of post-war music, both of whom opened up new worlds of sonic exploration.

[sjss.org.uk](http://sjss.org.uk)

### Spitalfields Music Festival

**December 2-10**

Curated by the conductor André de Ridder, the 2017 Spitalfields Music Festival is on a mission to celebrate classical music in its widest sense, placing reimagined seminal works side-by-side with groundbreaking contemporary creations, and blurring the boundaries between them as it does so. One flagship project for this year is Schumann Street, which invites a diverse range of musicians to reimagine Schumann's song cycle *Dichterliebe*. Their responses will then be presented in an immersive promenade installation in the Huguenot houses of Spitalfields. Another project, House of Monteverdi, sees early music and contemporary ensembles collaborating to celebrate the Italian composer's 450th anniversary, performing extracts from his Eighth book of Madrigals alongside some alternative, contemporary responses.

[spitalfieldsmusic.org.uk](http://spitalfieldsmusic.org.uk)

### St John's Smith Square Christmas Festival

**December 9-23**

Every year the St John's Smith Square's Christmas Festival provides a feast of yuletide atmosphere from start to finish. This, the festival's 32nd edition, opens with the City of London Choir leading a Carols by Candlelight concert, and ends with Stephen Layton conducting Polyphony and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in Handel's *Messiah*, with soloists including Anna Dennis and Matthew Brook. Other returning artists include Ex Cathedra, The Tallis Scholars, Solomon's Knot, the choirs of Clare College Cambridge, Trinity College Cathedral Choir Oxford. Appearing for the first time are Vox Luminis and the London Choral Sinfonia. An additional treat is organ curator David Titterton's Bach in Advent series of mostly free-admission recitals on the church's magnificent Klais organ, which run throughout December alongside the festival.

[sjss.org.uk](http://sjss.org.uk)

### St John's Smith Square Holy Week Festival

**March 26 - April 1, 2018**

Returning after a hugely successful inaugural year, Nigel Short, Tenebrae and St John's explore a vast range of sacred music in celebration of Holy Week. Artists include Tenebrae and Aurora Orchestra, Polyphony and the OAE, Gabrieli Consort and Players, Skylark (from the USA), Ex Cathedra, and The Tallis Scholars.

[sjss.org.uk](http://sjss.org.uk)

### Temple Winter Festival

**December 11-15**

Hosted by Temple Church, the fifth edition features the usual mix of seasonal performances from top ensembles in the UK choral world. Highlights for 2017 include The Tallis Scholars in a programme of Monteverdi, Palestrina, Praetorius and Isaac, and The Gesualdo Six performing a mix of contemporary music by composers such as Cheryl Frances-Hoad alongside Renaissance masterpieces. Other artists on the bill are Voces8, The BBC Singers, organist Greg Morris, The choir of Merton College Oxford and Temple Church Choir.

[templewinterfestival.co.uk](http://templewinterfestival.co.uk)

### Wexford Festival Opera

**October 19 - November 5**

Hosted by the National Opera House of Wexford in Ireland, Wexford Festival Opera was founded in 1951 by a group of local opera enthusiasts, encouraged and supported by the novelist and founder of *Gramophone*, Compton Mackenzie. It's been making a name for itself ever since with its stagings of high quality performances of unjustly neglected works. This year's lesser-known stagings are Luigi Cherubini's *Medea*, Jacopo Foroni's *Margherita*, Franco Alfano's *Risurrezione*, Rossini's *La scala di seta* and the world premiere of *Dubliners* by Andrew Synnott, based on the novel by James Joyce. Also on the programme is Verdi's *Rigoletto*, along with further concerts and lectures.

[wexfordopera.com](http://wexfordopera.com)

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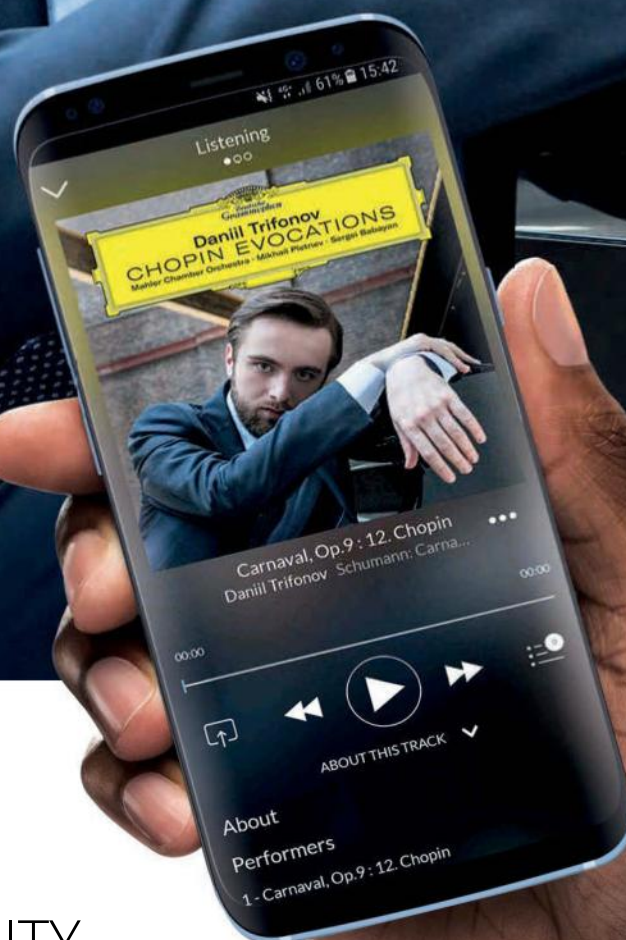


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# EUROPE FESTIVALS

## BAROKKFEST TRONDHEIM

**January 30 - February 4, 2018**

Once upon a time the Norwegian city of Trondheim's magnificent cathedral marked the northernmost outpost of the Pope in medieval Europe. Today it's still the world's northernmost cathedral (on the same latitude as Greenland) and the largest in Scandinavia, making it an exceptionally appropriate and atmospheric venue for the Barokkfest's array of instrumental, vocal and operatic performances. The theme for 2018 is Triumph, with Handel's *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno* as the centrepiece alongside opera recitals and instrumental music. Artists this year include mezzo-soprano Ann Hallenberg, French ensemble L'Arpeggiata directed by Christina Pluhar, Paul Agnew conducting Les Arts Florissants and lutenist Rolf Lislevand.

[barokkfest.no](http://barokkfest.no)



The theme of 2018's Barokkfest Trondheim is Triumph, with Handel's *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno* as the centrepiece

## Aix Easter Festival

**March 26 - April 8, 2018**

Co-founded in 2013 by its artistic director, violinist Renaud Capuçon, and its managing director Dominique Bluzet, this major Aix-en-Provence-based festival mixes concerts from international symphony orchestras, conductors and soloists based in the city's Grand Théâtre de Provence, with smaller chamber concerts taking place both next door in the architecturally striking Conservatoire Darius Milhaud, and in the city's atmospheric Théâtre du Jeu de Paume. The atmosphere is relaxed (there's genuinely no need to pack dressy evening wear), and the programming is unusually outside-the-box: in addition to major international ensembles and soloists expect rising young artists in major solo slots. The 2018 line-up looks as starry as ever. No details here, due to us publishing just before the lifting of the embargo, but it's all on the festival website from October 9.

[festivalpaques.com](http://festivalpaques.com)

## Bach Academy Bruges

**January 24-28, 2018**

Hosted by the Concertgebouw Brugge, this year's Bach Academy is themed 'Bach rearranged', and consists of five days of concerts exploring both how Bach edited and rearranged both his own music and that by others, and how other adventurous musicians have drawn inspiration from his heritage. Performance highlights include two vocal programmes plus open rehearsals from Collegium Vocale

Gent, Ricercar Consort with Bach's Stabat Mater, and violinist Bojan Cicic with a solo programme of Biber, Bach and Reger. Further illuminations come via illustrated talks, including a Fugues for Dummies music lesson with Frank Agsteribbe.

[concertgebouw.be/en](http://concertgebouw.be/en)

## Festival Présences

**February 10-19, 2018**

Founded and run by Radio France, with concerts taking place in the station's Auditorium and Studio 104, this annual contemporary music festival champions and commissions new music. Concerts encompass everything from large symphonic events to recitals, featuring computerised and electroacoustic music as well as more traditionally scored works. Radio France's own ensembles unsurprisingly feature strongly across the festival's 10 days, but also many guest ensembles and artists. Following on from 2017's focus on Kaija Saariaho, 2018 is centred on the composer, organist and improviser Thierry Escaich (b1965). Highlights include the Radio France-commissioned world premiere of his new orchestral work for the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France and its music director, Mikko Franck.

[maisondelaradio.fr](http://maisondelaradio.fr)

## Janáček Brno Festival

**November 22 - December 8**

Organised by the Brno National Theatre, this biennial festival aims to commemorate and further develop the artistic heritage of

Leoš Janáček, particularly celebrating his operas but also featuring many orchestral and chamber performances. The main event for the sixth edition of the festival is the premiere of a new production of *The Cunning Little Vixen*, directed by the Janáček Theatre Opera's artistic director Jiří Heřman, and performed by the opera's ensemble under its chief conductor, Marko Ivanović.

[janacek-brno.cz/en/](http://janacek-brno.cz/en/)

## Karlsruhe International Handel Festival

**February 16 - March 2, 2018**

Based in the south-west German town of Karlsruhe, this festival headed by the Staatstheater heads up its 2018 offerings with a new production of *Alcina*, directed by historical performance specialist Andreas Spering, with soprano Layla Claire in the title role, and a cast also including David Hansen, Claudia Boyle, Benedetta Mazzucato and Alexey Neklyudov. Other events include a revival of Christopher Moulds' production of *Semele*, and concert performances from countertenors Valer Sabadus and Franco Fagioli, soprano Rebecca Bottone, bass-baritone Andreas Wolf, and keyboardist and conductor Rinaldo Alessandrini.

[staatstheater.karlsruhe.de](http://staatstheater.karlsruhe.de)

## Klara Festival, Belgium

**March 9-30, 2018**

Founded in 2014, this annual Belgian festival is based in Brussels but also stages events in Antwerp and Bruges and aims to present contemporary, high-quality and

adventurous performances.

The 2018 edition opens with the Houston Symphony under Andrés Orozco-Estrada and soloist Hilary Hahn playing Bernstein and Dvořák; another highlight is James MacMillan conducting the Danish National Chorus and Orchestra in his *St Luke Passion*. Other artists include Boris Giltburg and the Pavel Haas Quartet in 'Russian Music after the Revolution', Ensemble Intercontemporain, and the Orchestre de Paris.

[klarafestival.be](http://klarafestival.be)

## La Folle Journée de Nantes

**January 31 - February 4, 2018**

One of France's largest annual classical music festivals, Nantes-based La Folle Journée takes A New World as its theme for 2018, exploring composers across history who have left their country, either for a short while or permanently - whether 20th-century composers such as Stravinsky and Schoenberg fleeing totalitarian regimes, or composers such as Dvořák who simply went on foreign adventures. Artists and programmes were still unconfirmed as we went to press, but we would expect top names to be on the line-up.

[follejournee.fr](http://follejournee.fr)

## Lucerne Easter Festival

**March 17-25, 2018**

Lucerne is the scene of no fewer than three major music festivals each year, with major international artists flocking to the combination of idyllic lakeside location and state-of-the-art KKL-Luzern concert hall, designed by Jean Nouvel.



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## NEW YEAR IN ZURICH

29 December 2017 - 1 January 2018



**3 nights from £1995 pp**

**Price includes:** 4-star accommodation opposite the Opera • First category ticket for performances of Puccini's *La fanciulla del West* and the New Year's Eve Gala performance of Rossini's *Le Comte Ory*, starring Cecilia Bartoli • Flights and airport taxes • Group transfers for all included activities • Guided sightseeing programme • Welcome drink and canapés, one dinner • The services of our Tour Manager

## AN ALPINE NEW YEAR

27 December 2017 - 1 January 2018



**5 nights from £2090 pp**

**Price includes:** 4-star accommodation in the mountains outside Innsbruck and 5-star in the heart of Salzburg's Old Town • Best available ticket for performances of Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* in Innsbruck, Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* and the New Year's Eve Gala concert in Salzburg • Flights and airport taxes • Group transfers for all included activities • Guided sightseeing programme • One lunch, three dinners • The services of our Tour Manager

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Established in 1988, the Easter Festival pays particular attention to sacred music, and as such includes a number of concerts in Lucerne's atmospheric churches, as well as the concerts in the KKL's Salle blanche. Details for 2018 will be available on the website from the beginning of November. To give you a flavour of what to expect in the meantime, last year's artist-in-residence was the Greek conductor Teodor Currentzis, who led his ensemble MusicAeterna in two concerts, including one with violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaya. There was also a public conducting masterclasses from Bernard Haitink. [lucernefestival.ch](http://lucernefestival.ch)

### Mozartwoche, Salzburg

**January 26 - February 4, 2018**

This annual festival presents Mozart's works from various different perspectives, in association with the music of other composers. Opening this year's festival is a new production of Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, conducted by René Jacobs and staged by Andrea Moses with a cast of young singers. The Vienna Philharmonic appear with three conductors this year: Alain Altinoglu, Robin Ticciati and Valery Gergiev. Other highlights will be contrasting interpretations of Mozart's pianistic oeuvre from Daniel Barenboim, András Schiff, Robert Levin, Piotr Anderszewski and David Fray. Also among 2018's visiting artists are soprano Marlis Petersen, the Schumann Quartett, as well as the B'Rock Orchestra together with the young German soprano Anna Lucia Richter. [mozarteum.at](http://mozarteum.at)

### Oslo International Church Music Festival

**March 2-11, 2018**

This 10-day festival held in the churches of Oslo presents traditional and contemporary church music, supported by lectures, with the aim of bringing together people of all cultural and religious backgrounds. You can expect everything from medieval and Baroque through to newly commissioned contemporary works, jazz and folk, and the three thoroughly contrasting themes for 2018 are Slavery, Women in Church Music, and GP Telemann. Performance highlights include *Les routes de l'esclavage* from Jordi Savall & Hespèrion XXI, French Baroque music with Les Talens Lyriques, *The Freedom of the Soul* with Il Suonar Parlante Orchestra and *Israel in Egypt* with Accademia Bizantina and The Norwegian Soloists' Choir. New music this year includes five world premieres and one Norwegian premiere. [oicmf.no](http://oicmf.no)

## STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL COMPOSER FESTIVAL

**November 16-24**

Established in 1986 and now a flagship event for Stockholm's Konserthuset and the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, this Swedish contemporary music festival focuses on composers it believes posterity will regard as highly as we now value Beethoven,

Brahms and other musical giants. This year's spotlight is on HK Gruber, and the opening concert sets the tone of the whole: Sakari Oramo conducting the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra in a programme featuring Gruber's *Dancing in the Dark*, his reworking of Johann Strauss II's polka,

*Perpetuum mobile*, Gruber's Piano Concerto, featuring soloist Emmanuel Ax, and Stravinsky's Symphony in Three Movements which, with its inclusion of a piano in its scoring, reflects Gruber's own fascination with Stravinsky's piano writing. [konserthuset.se/en](http://konserthuset.se/en)



Sakari Oramo leads the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra in an exploration of HK Gruber's sound world

### Paganini Festival

**October 27-29**

Tied to the long-running Premio Paganini International Violin Competition and based in Niccolò Paganini's Italian home city of Genoa, this brand new annual Italian festival acts this year as the prologue to the 2018 competition (April 5-14), the preliminary rounds of which will just have taken place. Competition-themed events across its nine concerts include performances from three past winners: Natalia Prishchenko, Giovanni Angelieri and Bin Huang. Paganini-flavoured highlights meanwhile include two performances featuring his own 'Cannon' Guarneri, which is usually kept as an exhibit in the Palazzo Tursi. The Palazzo itself acts as a festival hub, hosting some of the concerts, as well as presentations, guided tours and talks (some from Paganini's descendants), most of which have free entry. [visitgenoa.it/evento/paganini-genova-festival](http://visitgenoa.it/evento/paganini-genova-festival)

### Sochi Winter Arts Festival

**February 16-25, 2018**

Under the direction of Yuri Bashmet, this Russian multi-arts festival was first established in 2008. At the time, it was the main cultural event during the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi in 2014, and these days the

concerts take place in the Olympic ski resort's Rosa Khutor Hall, along with the Winter Theatre. In keeping with its multi-arts remit, its offerings are broad. Classical performances including world premieres, the International Musical Academy, the International Academy of Youth Composers, theatre and ballet all sit alongside ethnic music, jazz and rock. One highlight for 2018 is the world premiere of Kuzma Bodrov's brand new opera, *Queen of Spades*. [en.wiafs.ru](http://en.wiafs.ru)

### Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad

**January 26 - February 3, 2018**

Under the artistic direction of violinist Renaud Capuçon and based in the Swiss resort town of Gstaad, this festival's main events are the big-name evening concerts which take place in the ancient churches of nearby Saanen and Rougemont. However there's much more, because each year the festival also invites eight young artists who play the same instrument (rotating annually, and for 2018 it's the cello, with the Resident Mentor being Daniel Müller-Schott) to perform in a daytime recital series. This series also doubles up as a competition with a professional game-changer of a first prize: a first recording with an orchestra, on the Claves label. Each season brings high-profile artists, and 2018 is no different, with

soprano Christiane Karg, pianists Radu Lupu and Nelson Freire, and cellist Julia Hagen all appearing. The Composer-in-Residence next year will be Benjamin Attahir. [sommetsmusicaux.ch](http://sommetsmusicaux.ch)

### Valletta International Baroque Festival

**January 13-27, 2018**

Established as a celebration of the identity of the Maltese capital of Valletta itself, given that it reached its architectural and cultural heights in the Baroque period, this Mediterranean festival is centred around the Teatru Manoel, one of the oldest working theatres in Europe, but also extends its concerts to St John's Co-Cathedral, other atmospheric Valletta churches, the Grandmaster's Palace, the auberges and other Baroque buildings. The 2018 festival opens in Teatru Manoel with Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* from Concerto Köln and soloist Shunske Sato. Other Teatru Manoel highlights include harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani in a Chamber Music at the Zwinger Palace programme, performing alongside La Folia Barockorchester. Another chamber highlight is a recital from harpsichordist Jean Rondeau and lutenist Thomas Dunsford in Mdina Cathedral's Sala del Consiglio. [vallettabaroquefestival.com.mt](http://vallettabaroquefestival.com.mt)

# — REST OF THE WORLD FESTIVALS —

## Abu Dhabi Festival

**March 1-31, 2018**

Every year since 2004 many of the world's leading classical musicians have been drawn to the Middle East for the Abu Dhabi Festival. Details of next year's festival had yet to be revealed when we went to press, but earlier festivals have included appearances by Yo-Yo Ma, Silk Road Ensemble, Lang Lang, Natalie Dessay and Wynton Marsalis, so we expect the 2018 festival to feature an impressive line-up of artists.

[abudhabifestival.ae](http://abudhabifestival.ae)

## Al Bustan Festival, Lebanon

**February 13 - March 21, 2018**

Founded in 1994, this major Lebanese festival is working hard to revive the cultural life of a country re-emerging after 17 years of war. They're succeeding too, with each year more than 30 performances across the five weeks, majoring on chamber music but also encompassing opera, orchestral and choral concerts, dance, puppetry and theatre; and with the average capacity of the venues around 450, the concert atmosphere is generally intimate. Cellists feature strongly in the 2018 line-up, topped by two concerts from Steven Isserlis with the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra. There will also be Bach solo cello suites from Antonio Meneses and Victor Julien-Laferrière, and a cello and piano recital from Gautier Capuçon with Jérôme Ducros. Non-cello-themed highlights include Ottavio Dantone conducting the Accademia Bizantina in two concerts with countertenor Andreas Scholl, and The Swingles with their Jazz Sebastian Bach programme.

[albustanfestival.com](http://albustanfestival.com)

## Cape Town International Summer Festival

**January 18-28, 2018**

Presented by the Cape Town Philharmonic, Cape Town's annual International Summer Music Festival is welcoming a particularly interesting clutch of international-level younger artists for its 12th year. Leading the orchestra for the festival's duration is Perry So, winner of the Fifth International Prokofiev Conducting Competition in St Petersburg. The opening night features a performance of Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 2 with soloist Dmitry Masleev. Other younger-generation guest artists this year include pianist Olga Scheps and violinist Christina Brabetz, while pianist Múza Rubackyté is among the more established soloists.

[cpo.org.za](http://cpo.org.za)

## WHITE LIGHT FESTIVAL, LINCOLN CENTER

**October 18 - November 15**

The eighth edition of this multidisciplinary international festival this year explores transcendence, interior illumination and faith in the human spirit. One highlight among the 35 events being presented in 13 venues around New York is The Psalms Experience, a choral event bringing together the Choir of Trinity Wall Street, the Netherlands Chamber Choir, the Tallis Scholars and the Norwegian Soloists' Choir. They will present all 150 psalms set by 150 composers from Bach and Handel as well as eight new commissions from composers including Michel van de Aa and Isidora Žebeljan. Other highlights are a celebration of Meredith Monk, and Jordi Savall's exploration of the history of human exploitation in The Routes of Slavery (1444-1888), joined by guest artists from Africa, Europe and the Americas.

[lincolncenter.org/white-light-festival](http://lincolncenter.org/white-light-festival)



Jordi Savall explores the history of slavery, joined by artists from across the world

## Cartagena International Music Festival

**January 5-16, 2018**

Based in the Caribbean city of Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, this is one of this guide's most interesting, slightly-off-the-classical-track festivals. It is very much a classical festival, but with an additional mission to unite the musical traditions of Europe and Latin America - hence a series of concerts featuring music by Latin American composers, and the mix of European and Latin American artists. The theme for 2018 is The Essence of Form: The Classical Style, and the programme, which focuses on the music of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven aims to guide audiences into listening with 'new ears' to some of these composers' most important works. Visiting artists include the Munich Chamber Orchestra, the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de Colombia, and pianists Rudolf Buchbinder and Nelson Freire.

[cartagenamusicfestival.com](http://cartagenamusicfestival.com)

## Festival Cervantino Mexico

**October 11-29**

Mexico's beautiful colonial-era city, Guanajuato, is the setting for this multidisciplinary annual autumn festival that showcases the best of Mexico's cultural scene alongside visiting artists from other countries. Ensembles for 2017 include the Orquesta Sinfónica Mexiquense and Concerto Köln.

[festivalcervantino.gob.mx](http://festivalcervantino.gob.mx)

## Hong Kong International Chamber Music Festival

**January 17-24, 2018**

Under the artistic directorship of violinist Cho-Liang Lin, this important chamber festival, founded in 2009, showcases world-class musicians in Hong Kong's major concert halls and also its smaller boutique venues. Artists for 2018 include Jerusalem Quartet, Sitkovetsky Trio, viola player Richard O'Neill, cellist Li-Wei Qin, harpist Xavier de Maistre and pianists Orion Weiss and Anna Polonsky.

[pphk.org](http://pphk.org)

## Khachaturian Festival

**October 10 - December 10**

The fifth Khachaturian Festival opens with a performance by actor John Malkovich alongside the State Youth Orchestra of Armenia under Sergey Smbatyan. The SYOA and Smbatyan return later in the festival to perform the Armenian premiere of Shostakovich's Symphony No 13 (November 29) and Mahler's Ninth (December 5).

[khachaturianfestival.com](http://khachaturianfestival.com)

## Illumina Festival, Brazil

**January 2-14, 2018**

This festival, under the artistic direction of Jennifer Stumm describes itself as a 'hybrid of cutting-edge urban chamber music festival and immersive advancement opportunity'. What this means in practice is bringing world-class artists together with the best of the rising generation of

young South American musicians, who overwhelmingly come from less privileged backgrounds. It's based in the hills above São Paulo, concerts taking place at São Paulo's Museum of Art (MASP). The 2018 festival explores epic journeys ranging from Schubert's *Winterreise* to Bowie's *Space Oddity*, visiting artists including violinists Tai Murray and Alexandra Soumm, bass Matthew Rose, clarinettist Reto Bieri and members of the Danish Quartet.

[iluminafestival.org](http://iluminafestival.org)

## Seattle Chamber Music Society Winter Festival

**January 19-21 & 26-28, 2018**

Under the artistic direction of violinist James Ehnes, and taking place in the 540-seat Nordstrom Recital Hall, one especially appealing aspect of this festival is the free 30-minute recitals that take place an hour before each main concert. Highlights for 2018 include, over the first weekend, all three of Schumann's piano trios. The second weekend focuses on music by female composers, featuring Amy Beach's Piano Quintet, Fanny Mendelssohn's Piano Trio and Hildegard von Bingen's Three Antiphons. Among the artists joining Ehnes are violinists Karen Gomyo and Amy Schwartz Moretti, viola players Roberto Diaz and Yura Lee, cellists Edward Arron, Raphael Bell, Sæunn Thorsteinsdóttir and Bion Tsang, and pianists Andrew Armstrong, Adam Neiman and William Wolfram.

[seattlechambermusic.org](http://seattlechambermusic.org)

# Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad

**Charlotte Gardner** assesses the prestigious Swiss festival, which offers the winner of its Prix Thierry Scherz an invaluable opportunity: a concerto recording with a symphony orchestra

**N**ext June, the Swiss label Claves will release a new recording which, despite its summer timing, is all about winter. And, indeed, a whole lot more. It features the rising young American violinist Caroline Goulding with the Bern Symphony Orchestra in Korngold's Violin Concerto paired with Mozart's Violin Concerto No 5, and it's significant not only because it's Goulding's first solo recording with an orchestra, but because she hasn't had to raise a single penny towards it herself. Instead it's a gift to her from the Swiss alpine winter festival Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad as the 2017 recipient of its Prix Thierry Scherz, which – considering most young artists don't have access to the £20k-plus that an orchestral recording could set them back – is one tremendously huge deal.

Sommets Musicaux de Gstaad sits under the artistic direction of violinist Renaud Capuçon, and takes place annually over nine days straddling the end of January and the start of February; in 2018, it opens on January 26 and runs until February 3. It draws its largest audiences for its big-name evening concerts in the medieval churches of neighbouring Saanen and Rougemont (Sir András Schiff and Cappella Andrea Barca were there this year, for instance). However, as that aforementioned recording suggests, the festival is about far more than A-list performances in picturesque snowy locations, because ever since its inception in 2001 it's also been quietly but profoundly bringing up the next generation of international artists by means of its daytime recital-cum-competition strand.

This strand takes place in Gstaad's own little chapel and consists of eight daily recitals, each from a different young artist of the same instrument (chosen annually on a rotating basis). The artists select their own programmes, with the exception of a brand new piece to be prepared by everyone, composed by the



American violinist Caroline Goulding, winner of the 2017 Prix Thierry Scherz

festival's annually changing Composer-in-Residence – in 2018, this accolade falls to Benjamin Attahir. On the day of their recital they receive a coaching session both from the composer and from that year's Resident Mentor, an international artist of his or her instrument; Daniel Müller-Schott takes that title next year, the focus instrument being the cello.

At the end of the week the festival bestows two awards. First, the Prix André Hoffmann, a cash prize for the best interpretation of the festival commission. Then, secondly and most importantly, the Prix Thierry Scherz, which presents the recipient with his or her first recording opportunity with orchestra, on Claves; in other words, a true career game-changer.


'Just imagine, you play a recital and at the end of it you might have a recording with an orchestra!' exclaims Capuçon. 'I don't think there are any international competitions with this kind of offering.'

The eight musicians are chosen based on Capuçon's own knowledge of who

might be ready. 'It's a big responsibility to give someone a recording with an orchestra,' he explains. 'What we're looking for with the winner is someone focused not only on their instrument but on music, who could walk into a recording session with an orchestra tomorrow and shine. You can't just think, "Oh, they're OK", with something of this level. So if András Schiff or Daniel Barenboim are telling me, "This kid is great", then it has more value than any CV. I can trust them 100 per cent.'

This *modus operandi* has the further advantage of presenting musicians who won't always be ones you'll have already spotted on the major international competition circuit. Goulding herself is a case in point, invited upon the suggestion of her teacher Christian Tetzlaff, and who had hitherto been slowly making a name for herself not as a serial competitor but on the concert platform and, in recital form, the recording studio.

Equally un-competition-like is the fact that the festival is giving all eight young musicians a valuable experience whether or not they walk away with a prize, as Goulding herself points out.

'I'm so excited and grateful about recording these two concertos', she begins, 'but actually while I was there in Gstaad I didn't particularly think about that possibility. It was an unforgettable experience to work with Toshio Hosokawa, for instance, who wrote the 2017 festival commission; to know what the composer of a piece you're playing is thinking right here and now! Then I'd never met Renaud, who was the mentor for 2017's violin year. He's a phenomenal artist, and he worked with each person for a good amount of time. I then watched him perform that evening's concert with pianist Kit Armstrong, which was as inspiring as playing myself. So, for me, Gstaad is the whole package.'  Visit [sommetsmusicaux.ch](http://sommetsmusicaux.ch) for more information on the 2018 festival



Breathtaking views (from top, clockwise): aerial view of the Three Cities; Upper Barrakka Gardens; St John's Co-Cathedral; the ornate and intimate Teatru Manoel

# Baroque Music in Europe's Capital of Culture

Musicians descend on the city of Valletta for the most ambitious Baroque Music Festival yet

It is often said that the historic city of Valletta, with its Grand Port opening out into the blue-green expanse of the Mediterranean Sea, couldn't get any more beautiful.

However, for two weeks each January, Valletta's aesthetic star ascends even higher. For 14 days, the city is filled with stunning music of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries – the very period that saw its Old Town rise to glory. As the Maltese capital begins its year as European Capital of Culture in 2018, January's Valletta International Baroque Festival is set to be the most special yet.

The Festival was established in 2013 and has since garnered an enviable reputation, not only for the strength and character

**The Festival was established in 2013 and has since garnered an enviable reputation for the strength of its programming**

of its programming but also for the special atmosphere of the town and its spectacular venues for Baroque music – each with its own acoustic properties and beautiful interiors. Many

performances take place at the Teatru Manoel, one of the oldest working theatres in Europe. Sacred music finds a natural home in the region's beautiful cathedrals and churches, including

the elegant St Paul's Anglican Cathedral and the magnificent St John's Co-Cathedral, completed in 1577 to a design by the great Maltese architect Girolamo Cassar.

The festival's management promise that, for 2018, 'no stone has been left unturned in securing some of the best

contemporary Baroque exponents of the moment, from the international sphere as well as locally'. Valletta's churches and cathedrals will resound with the music of Handel's *Dixit Dominus* from the Ghislieri Consort and Choir, Victoria's *Lamentations of Jeremiah* from La Grande Chapelle and Monteverdi's pivotal 1610 *Vespers* from the festival's own Valletta International Baroque Ensemble. There are also performances from renowned early music groups Collegium Orpheus, Concerto Romano and the Abchordis Ensemble. Repertoire spans the full geographical and chronological coordinates of Baroque Europe, and is occasionally presented with a twist.

The Teatru Manoel, meanwhile, will play host to acclaimed ensembles, beginning with Concerto Köln, who present a performance of Vivaldi's evocative concertos *The Four Seasons* at the festival's opening concert. Also appearing at the theatre are Het Collectief, the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, the Huelgas Ensemble and *Gramophone* Award-winning harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani, who joins the baroque orchestra La Folia for

## Les Ambassadeurs perform Rameau, who was reaching his peak just as the Teatru Manoel's ornate auditorium was opened

an exploration of the chamber music of the Zwinger Palace in Dresden. The French ensemble Les Ambassadeurs will present a celebration of the theatre music of Jean-Philippe Rameau, the French composer and operatic figurehead who was reaching the peak of his fame and creativity just as the theatre's ornate and intimate auditorium was opened in 1732.

Valletta was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1980 and is one of the finest Baroque cities in Europe. Within the fortifications of the Old Town are winding streets, copious restaurants offering distinctive regional wine and cuisine, and unsurpassed views over the Mediterranean Sea. English is the region's predominant language and Valletta in January makes for the perfect weekend getaway: easily explored on foot, blessed with year-round sunshine and warm temperatures and only three hours' travel time from the UK, Valletta is alive with history, architecture and archeology – the perfect context for the festival's in-depth exploration of one of the richest periods in musical history. ⑥



Aerial view of Valletta (left) and harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani (above)



Brussels-based chamber music group Het Collectief perform at Teatru Manoel



The Abchordis Ensemble perform at one of Valletta's many beautiful churches



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# GRAMOPHONE

## RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Harriet Smith cheers Krystian Zimerman's first solo recording for over 20 years and finds his transcendent late Schubert both courageous and revelatory



### Schubert

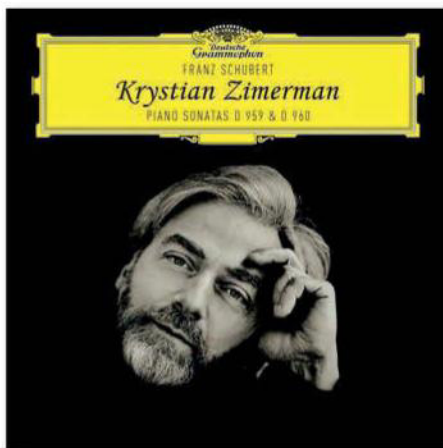
Piano Sonatas – No 20, D959; No 21, D960

Krystian Zimerman *pf*

DG © 479 7588GH (82' • DDD)

It has been a long, long time since Krystian Zimerman's last solo recording. Think back to his *Gramophone* Award-winning Debussy *Préludes* in 1994. Yes, that long. So he's up there with Sokolov in terms of rarity value. It is, he reveals in the booklet interview, all to do with approaching 60 (which he celebrated in December 2016, 11 months after this disc was recorded) and feeling that 'it was time to find the courage' for such works as the late Schuberts and late Beethovens, works that he has been playing for years. (By chance I heard him play these two sonatas live in the Royal Festival Hall last spring, when he stepped in at a moment's notice after Mitsuko Uchida had had to withdraw. That's what I call luxury casting.)

Courage? If only certain other artists could be so forbearing. You'll notice there are no comparisons listed. That's because this is one of those rare instances where they are not needed, do not illuminate the argument. Zimerman, quite simply, sounds like no one else. That's partly down to the instrument, having inserted into his Steinway a keyboard he has made himself. Yes, you did read that correctly: for if there's one thing that Zimerman is, it's obsessive about the detail. So this keyboard is intended to be better able



*'As Zimerman leads back to the opening material, the sense of the initial music being scarred by what has happened is searing'*



A solo Zimerman recording is up there with Sokolov in terms of rarity value

to sustain a *cantabile* line (this is done by having the hammer strike a different part of the string, if you want to get technical); it also has a wondrous clarity in the bass and is intentionally lighter-actioned, to avoid what the pianist describes as 'the many repeated notes in Schubert ... turning into Prokofiev'. Add to that the recording, made in the Performing Arts Centre in Kashiwazaki, a hall rebuilt after the earthquake of 2007, and you have the ideal circumstances for some very courageous Schubert.

Every element of these two sonatas has been thought out, considered; in the hands of a lesser artist the results could have been picky but instead they tend towards the transcendent. Take the second movement of the A major Sonata, D959.

Just listen to the accompaniment, the way that the minutest of shifts in terms of touch recolours it. And then there are the gradations of colour, of dynamic. Nothing is ever fixed, but living, breathing. The movement's extraordinary 'nervous breakdown' (as Uchida calls it) begins almost beguilingly, beautifully. He is much more controlled than some in the cataclysmic chords – passionate, yes, but less overtly desperate; some may not agree with this, but within the context of his reading of the movement, it works. As Zimerman leads back to the opening material, the sense of the initial music being scarred by what has happened is searing.



Krystian Zimerman draws you into a world of such detail it's as if you've never heard the music before

Time and again, Zimerman flouts received wisdom – his opening movement to D960 (of course with the repeat) sets off at a flowing pace but there's plenty of time for the unexpected. Again, some might want a more simply flowing account but Zimerman holds you in thrall, suspends reality just as surely as Richter did (though in utterly different ways). He does the same thing in the slow movement: the first 30 seconds draw you into a world of such detail it's as if you've never heard the piece before. And yet – and this is the miraculous bit – there's no sense of that detail winning over long-term thinking (which can happen in Zimerman's concerto performances). The instrument comes into its own where the music builds to climaxes without ever losing clarity in the bass.

The Scherzo of D960 is fascinating – it's elfin, yes, but rather than mere playfulness there's a gentleness to it. And rather than emphasising the contrasts of the Trio, Zimerman instead draws parallels between it and the Scherzo. The perfection with which he weights the closing chords is another heart-stopping moment. In the finale, there's again so much that is inimitable: the opening octave is brusque in attack and yet not snatched, while the rhapsody of the playing is staggeringly beguiling, as is the interplay between silence and sound. It is a journey of great intensity.

Enough words from me: the playing speaks for itself. This is a marvellously life-enhancing release. Go and hear it for yourself. **G**

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#### Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

# Orchestral



## David Fanning listens to Olli Mustonen's individual Prokofiev:

*'The Fifth Concerto promises to be another riot of colour and articulation, although it brings diminishing returns'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 48**



## Guy Rickards is impressed by Philip Sawyers's Third Symphony:

*'The visionary Adagio is music of searing intensity, while the Arnold-like Intermezzo is full of gentle humour'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 53**

## Borenstein

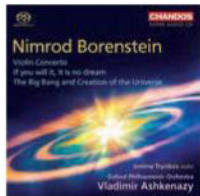
Violin Concerto, Op 60<sup>a</sup>. The Big Bang and Creation of the Universe, Op 52.

If You Will It, It Is No Dream, Op 58

Irmina Trynkos *vn* Oxford Philharmonic

Orchestra / Vladimir Ashkenazy

Chandos ④ CHSA5209 (57' • DDD/DSD)



Although his music has attracted significant premieres and several recordings, this is the

highest-profile disc yet devoted to the British-French-Israeli composer Nimrod Borenstein (b1969), three of whose recent orchestral pieces are featured here. Most substantial is the Violin Concerto (2013), which its composer intends as following in the lineage of Brahms, Sibelius and Shostakovich, but which more directly calls to mind Stravinsky in the layout of its four movements and the Second Concerto of Prokofiev in aspects of its figuration and motifs.

Technically demanding while never merely showy, at least as rendered by the excellent Irmina Trynkos, the solo part plays out against an orchestral backing where timpani and vibraphone enjoy a *concertante* role in music whose textural resourcefulness is not quite matched by its thematic memorability or expressive uniformity. Much the same also holds good for the other works. *The Big Bang and Creation of the Universe* (2009) is a triptych which unfolds from the luminous timbres of 'Light', through the tenuous tranquillity of 'Peace', to the cumulative animation of 'Adam and Eve'. *If You Will It, It Is No Dream* (2012) is a showpiece where the composer's much-vanted 'multimelodic' technique gives rise to music of an immediacy and distinctiveness almost equal to its nine-minute duration.

What is never in doubt is the commitment of the Oxford Philharmonic and long-time advocate Vladimir Ashkenazy in interpreting this music in the best possible light. Those responsive

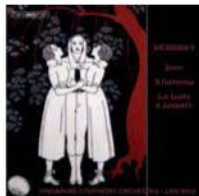
to the work of Nicolas Bacri or Guillaume Connesson should certainly give Borenstein a try. **Richard Whitehouse**

## Debussy

La boîte à joujoux. Jeux. Khamma

Singapore Symphony Orchestra / Lan Shui

BIS ④ BIS2162 (75' • DDD/DSD)



'The characters of this ballet are like moths in the night, like children who do not know the

rules of the game they are playing.' This is Diaghilev's description of *Jeux*, ahead of its premiere in 1913, when the audience notoriously found both Debussy's music and Nijinsky's choreography abstruse. The only one of Debussy's ballets to reach the stage in his lifetime, *Jeux* is now regarded as one of his greatest achievements, though why he produced this extraordinary score when he considered the subject 'idiotic and unmusical' remains to some extent a mystery. His attitude towards ballet, however, was ambiguous: Lan Shui and his Singapore Symphony explore the contradictions by placing *Jeux* alongside his lesser-known works for dance.

The conflict between artistic integrity and financial pressure lurks, one suspects, behind Debussy's ambivalence. Having initially turned *Jeux* down, he caved in when Diaghilev doubled his fee. *Khamma*, unheard until 1924, also started life as a money-spinner, when it was commissioned, in 1911, by the Canadian dancer Maud Allan, to a scenario set in ancient Egypt, which pre-empts *The Rite of Spring* in its depiction of a girl sacrificially dancing herself to death so that the gods will avert an impending military invasion. Debussy entrusted Koechlin with the orchestration but angrily withdrew the score when Allan demanded changes. When the illustrator André Hellé proposed the idea of a ballet for children, *La boîte à joujoux*, in 1913, however, Debussy accepted with both alacrity and pleasure, rapidly

producing the now familiar piano version the same year. Unfinished at his death, the orchestral score was completed by André Caplet and first performed in 1919.

Shui proves a first-rate interpreter of all three works. *Jeux* is startlingly dramatic, the ebb and flow of the music beautifully judged, the mood unsettlingly erotic and menacing, the orchestral sound darkly sensual. I prefer the greater transparency of Haitink's Concertgebouw here but the Singapore orchestra's playing is persuasively vivid and precise. Erotic menace is also integral to *Khamma*, where the orchestral sound is even darker, and baleful piano ostinatos drive the drama forwards. This is another superb performance, though Shui can't disguise the inspirational dips in the lengthy sacrificial dance. *La boîte à joujoux* is done with infinite charm and wit: there are some beautifully poised instrumental solos in the set piece toy-box divertissements. It's all essential listening if you're interested in the relationship between music and dance.

**Tim Ashley**

*Jeux* – selected comparison:

Concertgebouw, Haitink (11/80<sup>a</sup>) (PHIL) 438 742-2PM2

## Dvořák

Symphony No 1, 'The Bells of Zlonice', Op 3 B9

Nuremberg State Philharmonic Orchestra /

Marcus Bosch

Coviello ④ COV91718 (51' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at the Meistersingerhalle, Nuremberg, November 2016



Antonin Dvořák never heard his First Symphony. Submitted in 1865 for a

competition in Leipzig, it disappeared shortly afterwards. A certain Rudolph Dvořák (no relation) bought the score in a Leipzig bookshop in 1882 and sat on it for years; it was only after his death that the score emerged in 1923, eventually given its premiere in Brno in 1936. There is plenty of Mendelssohn in the work (unsurprisingly



Vladimir Ashkenazy (left) with Nimrod Borenstein (centre) and violinist Irmína Trynkos during the recording sessions of Borenstein's Violin Concerto for Chandos

given the Leipzig connection) as well as Beethoven – the C minor sequence of keys mirroring Beethoven's Fifth almost exactly. The symphony is frequently subtitled *The Bells of Zlonice*, although it doesn't appear anywhere on the score. However, Dvořák had been sent to Zlonice as a child to learn German and to receive piano lessons, so it's not so unlikely an appellation.

Marcus Bosch nears the end of his Dvořák cycle with this live recording. In common with others in this series, the Staatsphilharmonie Nürnberg offers a brusque, burly reading. Bosch powers through the lengthy first movement, in which he takes the exposition repeat, as did István Kertész with the LSO in 1966, the first uncut recording of the work. Rafael Kubelík, with the Berlin Philharmonic, doesn't bother. I'm with Kubelík – it's a rousing symphony, but at over 50 minutes it rambles.

The ebullient Nuremberg horns are not quite as refulgent as the LSO or Berlin Philharmonic but they offer spirited playing. Woodwinds coil around each other persuasively in the slow movement, even if Kubelík takes a much more flowing tempo to give it a truly pastoral lilt. The perky *Allegretto* is the closest we get to Dvořák's Bohemian character, while Bosch speeds

through the finale. The exuberance is let down by a foggy recording here: the first violins' pizzicato (at 1'00") can barely be heard. Bosch's approach is all a bit fierce and misses some of the Dvořákian charm. At just 51 minutes, the disc is short measure, especially considering all the Dvořák symphonic poems or *Slavonic Dances* that could have been recorded. **Mark Pullinger**

*Selected comparisons:*

LSO, Kertész (10/67<sup>th</sup>) (DECC) 430 046-2

BPO, Kubelík (DG) 463 158-2GB6

## Elcock

'Orchestral Music, Vol 1'

Symphony No 3, Op 16. *Choses renversées par le temps ou la destruction*, Op 20<sup>a</sup>.

Festive Overture, Op 7

<sup>a</sup>Richard Casey *hpd* Royal Liverpool

Philharmonic Orchestra / Paul Mann

Toccata Classics © TOCCO400 (72' • DDD)



It is humbling that a self-taught European composer in his sixties can have written such a

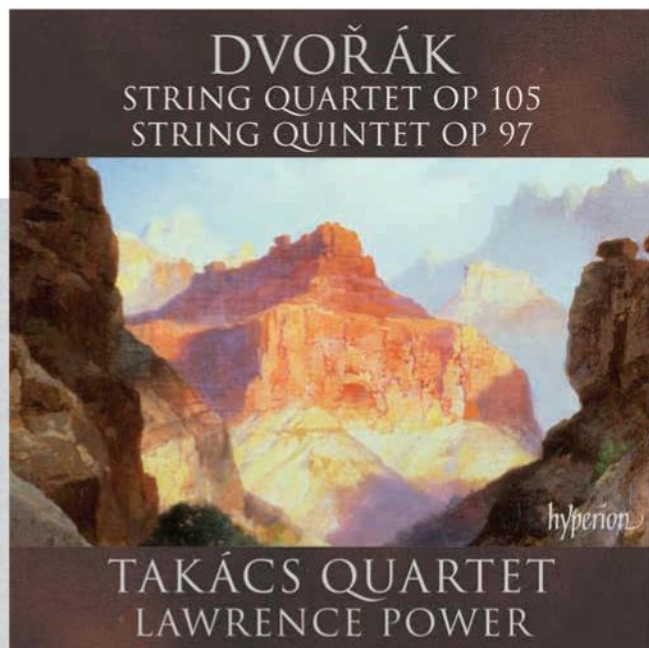
stack of well-crafted, emotionally honest and non-derivative music without anybody really noticing and with hardly a note being

performed professionally. But as much as I or anyone else might like to meet and quiz Steve Elcock, let's not get carried away.

The hyperactive literature talks of him possessing a 'sense of symphonic momentum that has its roots in the Nordic-British tradition of Sibelius, Nielsen, Simpson ...'. While there are obvious parallels in the music's surface noise – but to my ears just as much of, say, Honegger or Walton – I would tentatively suggest that its inner workings and meta-flow are more rigid and compartmentalised. Before the composer's Third Symphony breaks free in its third movement, the work's order can resound to its detriment, suggesting the music of plan and process (as much in the use of a motivic cell as in movements constructed over an ostinato and a *passacaglia*).

That it's difficult to gauge Elcock's true significance from 70 minutes of music is reinforced by the differently conceived *Choses renversées par le temps ou la destruction*. This literal depiction of destruction slowly removes notes from the opening of the F sharp minor Prelude from Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Again, the process can feel a little contrived but its central second movement is a wondrous surprise, distinctive and wrong-footing

# hyperion



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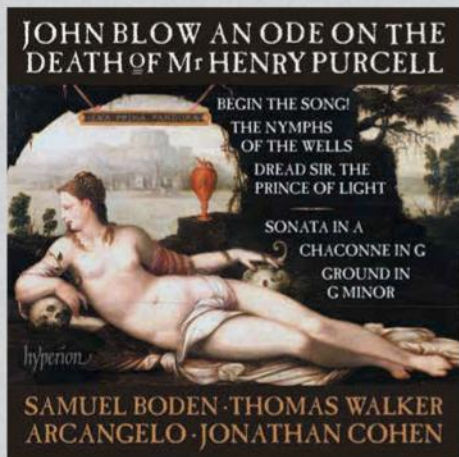
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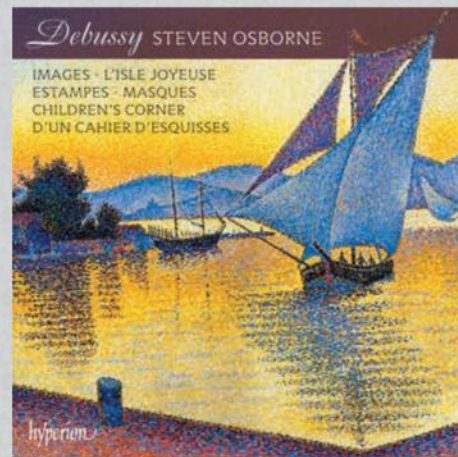
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Lan Shui and the Singapore Symphony Orchestra are first-rate interpreters of Debussy's ballet scores – see review on page 42

in its curious time signatures, even if the jury's still out on matters of transitioning and tangible relationships to the surrounding movements.

If I'd waited so long to hear my music professionally rendered, I'd have wanted the strings to be better rehearsed and more prominently recorded, especially so in the *Festive Overture* with its bold overlapping fanfares (there's the feeling here and in the other works that, in a textural sense, anything could happen). The only remaining question is whether a composer of true significance can acceptably remain untouched by at least half a century's worth of linguistic evolution. Elcock's passionate music born of splendid isolation – geographical, political, stylistic – goes some way, but only some, to making that question irrelevant. **Andrew Mellor**

## Fricker

Symphonies – No 1, Op 9<sup>a</sup>; No 2, Op 14<sup>b</sup>; No 3, Op 36<sup>c</sup>; No 4, Op 43<sup>d</sup>. Comedy Overture, Op 32<sup>b</sup>. Rondo scherzoso<sup>a</sup>

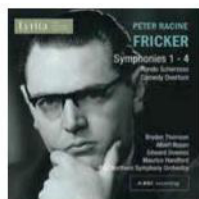
**BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra /**

<sup>c</sup>Edward Downes, <sup>d</sup>Maurice Handford,

<sup>b</sup>Albert Rosen, <sup>a</sup>Bryden Thomson

Lyrta Itter Broadcast Collection © 2 REAM2136 (151' • ADD)

BBC broadcast performances, September 12 – October 7, 1980



Lyrta follows up its useful pairing (4/16) of Peter Racine Fricker's oratorio *The Vision of*

*Judgement* (1958) and Fifth Symphony (1975) with this stimulating release containing the composer's remaining four numbered symphonies. All are works of substance and conviction, presented here in stereo broadcasts featuring the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra (now BBC Philharmonic), which in turn emanate from a seven-part series transmitted during the autumn of 1980 to mark Fricker's 60th birthday.

Bryden Thomson secures a first-class account of the Koussevitzky Prize-winning First Symphony (1948-49), a four-movement edifice of striking accomplishment, imaginative sweep and genuine staying power, premiered under John Barbiroli at the 1950 Cheltenham Festival and subsequently taken up by (among others) Hermann Scherchen and Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt. Its scarcely less meaty successor from 1950-51 (which boasts an especially eloquent *Andante* centrepiece) was commissioned for the Festival of Britain at the behest of the City

of Liverpool. Hugo Rignold and the RLPO gave the first performance in July 1951, and the same band went on to make a fine recording of it with John Pritchard in 1954 (originally issued by HMV on a 10-inch LP, it was last available on British Composers, 1/03 – nla). Albert Rosen presides over a lucid rendering which makes up for in spirit what it may occasionally lack in polish.

Completed in 1960, the Third Symphony impresses by dint of its sinewy logic, uncompromising integrity and gravity of discourse; suffice to say, Edward Downes does it absolutely proud. Begun in 1964 and finished two years later, the Fourth runs for nearly 38 minutes and comprises 10 interlinked sections with a deeply felt *Adagio elegiaco* at its heart. By turns angry, tender, sombre and intimate, this notably ambitious, shrewdly plotted canvas bears a dedication to the memory of Fricker's teacher and good friend Mátyás Seiber, who perished in a car crash aged only 55, and whose masterly Third String Quartet of 1951 is quoted towards the end of the symphony. The composer made some revisions prior to the present performance under Maurice Handford's conscientious baton. Also included are the *Rondo scherzoso* and *Comedy Overture* from 1948 and 1958 respectively (most enjoyable discoveries, both), boosting the

playing-time to in excess of two and a half hours.

There's an erroneous cue in the First Symphony, whose third movement ('Tableau and Dance') spills over into the following track (the finale itself actually begins at 3'09"); otherwise, the detailed presentation is all one could desire, and Richard Itter's domestic tapes have come up admirably. Make no mistake, there's some intriguing and rewarding repertoire on this brave Lyrita anthology.

Andrew Achenbach

## M Haydn · Mozart

M Haydn Divertimento, MH412 - Marcia.

Serenade, MH133, MH104, MH *deest* Mozart

Bassoon Concerto, K191. Cassation, K99 - March

Sergio Azzolini *bn* Fruzsina Hara *tp*

Bolzano String Academy

Sony Classical © 88985 36991-2 (61' • DDD)



Four works by two composers combine to create this hour-long concert of the

sort that was common in Salzburg during Mozart's teen years. Outdoor serenades (*Nachtmusiken*) were flanked by a pair of marches for the ingress and egress of the players, and consisted within of a chain of dance and *concertante* movements. Sergio Azzolini recreates a hypothetical such entertainment by combining some stray pieces by Michael Haydn (Mozart's older Salzburg colleague) with the wunderkind's Bassoon Concerto. Among the Haydn works are a further movement with solo bassoon and a pair for solo trumpet in the Baroque style, which give an idea how the tantalisingly lost trumpet concerto by the 12-year-old Mozart might have sounded.

Fruzsina Hara is the fearless trumpet soloist, taking the instrument way up into the stratospheric upper limits of its range – sounds we associate more with Bach, Handel and their contemporaries than with the composers of the Classical period. And as for the Bassoon Concerto, Azzolini is a spirited soloist. He plays an instrument from the 1790s of a type that Mozart would have known, and explains how the use of a period bassoon makes evident the challenges Mozart placed on his bassoonist (at whose supposed identity annotator Karl Böhm makes an educated stab). Azzolini makes light work of all these difficulties, exploiting the instrument's ruddy sonority to full effect and tugging gleefully at the pulse to turn in a performance full of character and humour.

This is purely entertainment music, so devoid of the intellectual wranglings of the symphonic and chamber style that both of the composers were to master. Frankly, the Bassoon Concerto is the best music here, but the remainder – including Haydn's march-in and Mozart's march-out – is finely wrought and beautifully played by the Streicherakademie Bozen, a German-named but Italian-based period-instrument band. **David Threasher**

## Mendelssohn

Symphony No 2, 'Lobgesang', Op 52

Lucy Crowe *sop* Jurgita Adamonytė *mez*

Michael Spyres *ten* Monteverdi Choir; London

Symphony Orchestra / Sir John Eliot Gardiner

LSO Live © ( + DVD) LSO0803 (64' • DDD/DSD •

24-bit/192kHz DTS-HD MA5.1 & LPCM stereo • T/t)

Recorded live at the Barbican, London,

October 16 & 20, 2016



The last instalment in John Eliot Gardiner's bracing Mendelssohn cycle with the London

Symphony Orchestra marks up a significant success. Confession time. Usually, once the singing begins in the *Lobgesang* ('Hymn of Praise') Second Symphony, I begin to switch off. After three pleasant orchestral movements lasting around 30 minutes – the *Allegretto* is a charmer – Mendelssohn tacks on a cantata finale of some 45 minutes that unbalances the work and seriously tests my patience. Not so here. Aided by fine soloists and, above all, Gardiner's excellent Monteverdi Choir, this performance has a vitality that compels attention.

Claudio Abbado's 1986 recording with the LSO set a new benchmark for the *Lobgesang*. Yet we live in leaner, cleaner times: Yannick Nézet-Séguin's recent Chamber Orchestra of Europe account on DG strips seven minutes off Abbado; Gardiner whittles away another three, clocking in at just 64 minutes. Listen to the opening trombone fanfares and the string responses. Abbado sounds portentous and worthy – *maestoso*, for sure, but without the *con moto* Mendelssohn indicates. Nézet-Séguin is swifter, more purposeful. Gardiner sets off at the same pace but there is a rhythmic crispness to the brass-playing that signals clear intent, while the strings are sinewy but never underpowered. The excellent LSO woodwinds really dance in the *Allegretto un poco agitato* second movement, Gardiner pulling back just enough to retain a wistful character.

But as soon as we get to the choral section, Gardiner's performance catches

alight like no other. The 44-strong Monteverdi Choir launch into 'Die Nacht ist vergangen' with real joy as day arrives donning 'armour of light', while their diction in the fervent Lutheran hymn 'Nun danket alle Gott' is pin-sharp. Of the soloists, Lucy Crowe sounds a little pinched at the top when compared with Karina Gauvin's refulgent tone for Nézet-Séguin but she blends well with Jurgita Adamonytė in 'Ich harrete des Herrn'. Tenor of the moment Michael Spyres excels in 'Er zählet unsere Tränen' and the urgent Nightwatchman episode. The final choral fugue is genuinely uplifting, a splendid way to conclude Gardiner's splendid cycle. **Mark Pullinger**

*Selected comparisons:*

LSO, Abbado (1/86) (DG) 415 353-2GH4

COE, Nézet-Séguin (9/17) (DG) 479 7337GH3

## Mozart

'Piano Concertos, Vol 2'

Piano Concertos<sup>a</sup> – No 14, K449; No 19, K459.

Divertimentos – K136; K138

<sup>a</sup>Jean-Efflam Bavouzet *pf*

Manchester Camerata / Gábor Takács-Nagy

Chandos © CHAN10958 (70' • DDD)



Last November David Threasher found himself entranced by Vol 1

of Bavouzet's Mozart concertos with the Manchester Camerata, concluding: 'this is a sheer delight and leaves you wondering which way Bavouzet will turn next in his cycle – and when.' Now we know: Vol 2 similarly pairs two of the less often-recorded concertos (though that's a relative term in this repertoire) with two early string divertimentos. The latter are the product of the 15-year-old Mozart's pen and they couldn't get a more persuasive reading than they do here under Gábor Takács-Nagy's direction. The D major, K136, has a Baroque-ish busyness to its opening movement and some nice twists as it turns to the minor, even if I didn't exactly come away humming the tunes. A stately slow movement, which perhaps overuses its opening theme, is followed by a dartingly energetic finale. The yearning slow movement of K138 offers a hint of the great slow movements of the composer's maturity, while the humour of its high-spirited finale is enhanced by the pinpoint phrasing and taut interplay of the Camerata strings.

But to get to the main selling point of this disc, we have two concertos from the

beginning and end of 1784. While the wind are optional in K449 (but never feel so in this many-hued performance), they certainly are not in K459. Bavouzet enjoys the pomp of the piano's first entry in the opening movement of K449 but also its inward qualities, some of the most memorable moments coming when he is accompanying the orchestra. Highlights are too many to list but the solemn slow movement is certainly one of them, the strings distinctly more sparing in their use of vibrato than the Czech Chamber Orchestra for Moravec, though both he and Bavouzet are superbly poised. They resist the temptation to take the Bachian finale too fast – it is after all only marked *Allegro ma non troppo*, and the variety of touches Bavouzet brings to the line is just one of the many wondrous things about this disc (Uchida and Tate sound rather less energised here, thanks in part to the smoother phrasing of the strings). The sense of witty interplay as the time signature switches to 6/8 for the movement's close is irresistible.

In the first movement of K459, Mozart's almost obsessive use of the dotted rhythm motif that launches the concerto is treated to an endless variety of colours and phrasing – Uchida and the Cleveland are similarly imaginative, though I find Goode and the Orpheus just a touch too fast here – while the second movement is a true *Allegretto*; the concluding *Allegro assai* is an infectious chattering affair, full of the most delightful conversations between the soloist and his Camerata colleagues.

#### Harriet Smith

*Concerto No 14 – selected comparisons:*

Moravec, Czech CO, Vlach (9/77\*) (SUPR) SU3809-2

Uchida, ECO, Tate (2/89\*, 6/06) (PHIL) 473 313-2PM2  
or 475 7306PB8

*Concerto No 19 – selected comparisons:*

Goode, Orpheus CO (A/00) (NONE) 7559 79608-2


Uchida, Cleveland Orch (11/14) (DECC) 478 6763DH

## Mozart

Piano Concertos – No 11, K413<sup>a</sup>; No 12, K414<sup>b</sup>;  
No 13, K415<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Marie Kuijken, <sup>b</sup>Veronica Kuijken *fp*

La Petite Bande / Sigiswald Kuijken *vn*

Challenge Classics ©  CC72752

(75' • DDD/DSD)

## Mozart

Piano Concertos – No 12, K414<sup>a</sup>; No 20, K466<sup>b</sup>

Jan Bartoš *pf*<sup>a</sup> Doležal Quartet; <sup>b</sup>Czech

Philharmonic Orchestra / Jiří Bělohlávek

Supraphon © SU4234-2 (57' • DDD)



One and a half discs here present Mozart's piano concertos in their stripped-down forms for piano with string quartet, thus omitting the woodwind instruments that were very much the composer's hallmark in his Viennese music, and especially in the concertos. He prepared (or sanctioned) these small-scale versions of K413–415 to enable domestic performance and thus maximise the works' sales potential, not to mention making them better known among the Austrian capital's middle classes.

These days we can, literally at the push of a button, hear these works in their full woodwind-bedecked glory, so it's something of a puzzle as to why people persist in recording them in these compromised versions. Still, that is what we have here. The Kuijkens' disc is very much a family affair, with the solo parts taken by sisters Veronica and Marie, father Sigiswald directing from the violin and Sara, another sister, beside him on second violin.

The use of a double bass rather than a cello adds beef to the sound, providing a luxurious cushion for the fortepiano which,

while unidentified in the booklet, has a pleasing tone, with a ringing top and a bass that is fully capable of growling when needs be. These are fine performances, too: perhaps Veronica is by a shade the more mellifluous, imaginative player in the C major and A major Concertos than her sister in the F major.

Jan Bartoš, on the other hand, plays on a modern piano and is joined by a steel-strung quartet with the standard line-up for K414. The acoustic here is more spacious, allowing for greater ease of balance between the instruments, although you are aware throughout that Bartoš is careful never to eclipse his partners. In the hymnlike slow movement he spins a beguiling, sustained melody that contrasts wonderfully with his sprightly playing elsewhere.

Nevertheless, these works are best heard as intended. Kristian Bezuidenhout scored an Editor's Choice last year with his disc of the three concertos, and that would certainly be a viable period-instrument first choice; Mozartians will be sure to have their favourites among the many cycles on modern instruments.

It seems almost impertinent to refer at last to Bartoš's D minor Concerto with the full forces of the Czech PO under the late Jiří Bělohlávek, recorded in May 2013. This displays all the characterful acumen the pianist brings to K414, with some beautiful woodwind-playing – at last! – from the Czech players.

#### David Threasher

*K413–415 – selected comparison:*

Bezuidenhout, Freiburg Baroque Orch, von der Goltz

(11/16) (HARM) HMC90 2218

## Ordoñez

Symphonies – Brown I:B2; Brown I:C13;

'Sinfonia solenna', Brown I:D5; Brown I:f12

L'Arte del Mondo / Werner Ehrhardt

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi © 88985 44185-2  
(58' • DDD)



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Olli Mustonen, in harness with compatriot Hannu Lintu, trains a spotlight on Prokofiev's brittleness



Karl von Ordoñez (or Carlo d'Ordoñez, among various spellings; 1734–86)

was a member of the minor Spanish nobility but spent his life in Vienna, enjoying a career as a Habsburg civil servant. That he was nothing more than a dilettante composer makes it astonishing that he wrote so much, including more than 70 symphonies, a representative quartet of which is recorded here.

These are putatively dated during the 1760s and '70s, although the F minor might be from as early as the 1750s; its austerity could be thought to link it to the *Sturm und Drang* of the following decade but it wastes no time in turning to lyrical A flat and its three-movement form suggests the earlier date. The Symphony in C has a wonderful second subject for oboes and horns, which return in the finale for some antiphonal fanfares, but here the music doesn't seem to be completely 'under the fingers' and one wonders what a Freiburg Baroque Orchestra or Berlin Akademie might make of it. Horns are also to the fore in the B flat Symphony that opens the disc: a work that revels more in *galant* sound effects than in anything approaching a melody. The disc

closes with a seven-movement D major work, which Ordoñez (although not the CD documentation) called *Simfonia solenna*; scholars suggest this might have been used in a liturgical context, and if you squint you might just be able to make out glosses on the *Kyrie*, *Gloria* and 'Et incarnatus est', for example. There's also a violin solo, the one misfire on the disc, which surely should have been retaken to avoid some stomach-turning intonation.

Ordoñez was clearly not among the first rank of musicians of his day – even *Grove* draws attention to some unimaginative, not to say deficient modulatory passages. Nevertheless, he was among those who guided the development of the Viennese Classical style in its early days and there is much pleasure to be had in discovering his music. **David Thresher**

## Prokofiev

Piano Concertos – No 2, Op 16; No 5, Op 55

Olli Mustonen *pf*

Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Hannu Lintu  
Online © ODE1288-2 (58' • DDD)



Olli Mustonen's extreme interventionism is a known quantity

by now, and it might be thought that of all composers Prokofiev – himself an inveterate exhibitionist – would have least to lose and most to gain from that. Even so, it takes unswerving commitment on the part of the listener to the ideal of performer's licence to yield willingly to this kind of presentation.

Mustonen certainly cannot be accused of achieving his effects by means of velocity. If anything he does so by reining in the tempo and filling the resultant space with bizarre inflections and sudden splashes of colour and voicing, keeping the general dynamic level discreet so that every one of Prokofiev's licks and curls can be savoured to the max. He is already up to his tricks in the narrative opening of the Second Concerto, randomly poking out notes in the accompaniment at the expense of the lyrical line, then pushing staccato grotesquerie to the max. Far from apologising for Prokofiev's brittleness, he trains the spotlight on it. The perpetual-motion second movement is commanding and certainly not devoid of shape, but everything is too calculating and perverse to register as wit or fantasy. In the Intermezzo third movement and the finale pianist and orchestra kick up an effective storm, albeit at the expense of headlong momentum.

The opening of the Fifth Concerto promises to be another riot of colour

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and articulation, but after the first couple of pages it too brings diminishing returns. Like an actor who imposes his idiosyncratic voice on every part he acts, Mustonen is piquant and attractive for a while but fairly soon tiring. If he could add some charm and a smile to his repertoire and be more sparing with the leers and grimaces, he would be so much more compelling.

For a comparable level of pianistic originality, allied to more physical directness and breadth of dramatic conception, though admittedly a degree of artificiality in the recording, do give Vladimir Krainev a try. **David Fanning**

*Selected comparison:*

Krainev, Moscow PO, Kitaenko

(9/79%) (MELO) MELCD100 2227

## Rachmaninov

**Behr** Lachtäubchen, 'Polka de WR'

(arr Rachmaninov) **Kreisler** Liebesleid

(arr Rachmaninov) **Rachmaninov** Piano

Concerto No 2, Op 18. Études-tableaux, Op 33

**Borus Giltburg** *pf* **Royal Scottish National**

**Orchestra / Carlos Miguel Prieto**

Naxos (M) 8 573629 (67' • DDD)



Boris Giltburg certainly has something fresh to say in Rachmaninov's

Second Concerto, that well-worn, much-loved masterpiece, and in his new Naxos recording with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra under Carlos Miguel Prieto, he says it elegantly and eloquently. I avoid the word 'personal' because, while it is obvious that everything is deeply felt, what we hear seems a portrayal of the composer's musical imagery, rather than the soloist's take on it. The 'money tunes' aren't milked but delivered with patrician simplicity. Consequently, they speed directly to the heart, creating resonance instead of overflow. Prieto and the Scots are near-ideal collaborators, stepping robustly forwards when called for, and always supporting with the utmost tact. When roles are reversed, as in the *Adagio*, Giltburg's chaste accompaniment effortlessly holds the beautiful wind solos aloft. His varied articulation lends the swirls and eddies of figuration remarkable expressive vitality. For all the admirable attention to detail, one of the most appealing aspects of this performance is its grand trajectory. The march near the end of the first movement abjures any hint of a weary slog through a snow-covered Siberia in favour of a courageous, purposeful progress towards a goal, that goal only fully

revealed in the third-movement finale as the triumph of unalloyed joy.

As one might have anticipated from Giltburg's recent recording of the Op 39 *Études-tableaux* (6/16), Op 33 is an equally choice offering. He brings the same aptness to his realisations of Rachmaninov's often extreme emotional evocations, be they the robust swagger in the F minor Étude (No 1), interrupted as though confidence has caved in to debilitating doubt; the contorted ambivalence of the C minor Étude (No 3), opening up to the endless vistas of C major with a palpable sense of relief; or the true *tempo moderato* of (No 4), where the carefully delineated voice leading conjures the air of an ancient folk tale. Rachmaninov's obsession with bells is always in evidence in these unforced, beautifully pianistic readings. The transcription of Kreisler's *Liebesleid* and the *Polka de WR* round out the programme with their heady perfume of overripe nostalgia.

One imagines that Giltburg must be thoroughly conversant with Rachmaninov's recorded legacy but his readings are far from simulacra. Rather than imitating Rachmaninov, Giltburg seems to imbibe the composer's spirit. Doing so, he provides the best testimony I know of that Rachmaninov's 116-year-old signature concerto still has a long, healthy life ahead of it. **Patrick Rucker**

## Rachmaninov

Piano Concerto No 2, Op 18.

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op 43

**Anna Vinnitskaya** *pf* **NDR Elbphilharmonie**

**Orchestra / Krzysztof Urbanski**

Alpha (E) ALPHA275 (57' • DDD)



The piano and orchestra are on an equal footing throughout

Rachmaninov's Second Concerto and *Paganini* Rhapsody, meaning that the best performances should ideally project both virtuoso bravura and chamber-like interaction between soloist and ensemble. This happens throughout the Second Concerto's opening movement, where both pianist Anna Vinnitskaya and conductor Krzysztof Urbanski resist the temptation to smother lyrical passages. I especially like how Vinnitskaya seemingly throws away the famous second subject, avoiding the kind of generic ritards young pianists favour in the name of expression. By contrast, the performers do not define the slow movement's polyrhythmic textures with the pliability and inner sense of pulse required

to move the music forwards, as one readily hears from Hough/Litton, Ashkenazy/Previn and Kocsis/de Waart. The *Allegro scherzando*'s opening piano flourish is accurate but unexciting, followed by clunky interchanging phrases between piano and orchestra, while the incisive imitative sequences lack the stinging intensity of Katchen/Solti, Andsnes/Pappano and Zimmerman/Ozawa, even in softest moments.

The backward, piano-dominated balance helps neither here nor in the *Paganini* Rhapsody, where the composer's myriad felicities of *concertante* scoring are often reduced to a pleasant backdrop. For example, Variation 3's fluttering winds and Var 8's brass punctuations fall flat next to their vivid Hough/Litton counterparts, although slower variations like Var 12's minuet and the foreboding Var 22 leading into the famous Var 23 are excellently aligned and characterised. Vinnitskaya also seems more attuned to the work's truly rhapsodic elements (Var 11's suave double-note runs, for example), but doesn't quite achieve the tigerish and demonic momentum distinguishing the recent Berezovsky/Liss traversal, not to mention the vivacious Wild/Horenstein stereo-era reference version. As you've gathered, this release faces tough catalogue competition.

**Jed Distler**

## Rachmaninov

Symphony No 1, Op 13

**Philharmonia Orchestra / Vladimir Ashkenazy**

Signum (E) SIGCD484 (43' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London, November 17, 2016



It's third time around for Vladimir Ashkenazy and the Rachmaninov

symphonies. Indeed, it's difficult to think of any active musician more completely at home in this repertoire. His famous studio recordings of the 1980s remain competitive, at once red-blooded and light on their feet. Only the placement of instrumental choirs in that big Concertgebouw acoustic can seem rather woozy now, the early digital production tending to attenuate the rich string tone of its resident orchestra. Ashkenazy revisited the First as part of his 2007 Sydney Rachmaninov Festival and when a set of mostly live renditions emerged on disc the relatively close-up sound was presumably intended to stifle any noises off. A vain hope in this case. The present Signum recording, with a sonic profile somewhere between the two, was captured

in concert at London's Royal Festival Hall last November. Given that the venue is probably the least acoustically generous of those encountered during the orchestra's UK-wide Rachmaninov project, the results are commendable if scarcely lustrous, with kettledrums unexpectedly prominent.

The composer Robert Simpson reckoned Rachmaninov's First Symphony the finest of the three, wowed by its obsessive motivic workings. Problems persist, however, chiefly over matters of scoring, and Ashkenazy is not one to refurbish the first movement's occasionally inept textures. Its opening gestures are enunciated without fuss. Nor is its *maestoso* climax capped by the unvalidated bells favoured by Ormandy, Previn, Litton and the late Zoltán Kocsis (whose exceptionally fleet, live-ish version should be better known). Old hands perceiving Ashkenazy to be faster than before will find him relaxing the inner movements, the *Allegro animato* flickering deftly, the darker *Larghetto* heartfelt with notably eloquent solo clarinet work from Mark van de Wiel. Good to see orchestra members listed in the booklet, for all that Signum's sky-blue backgrounds make texts difficult to read. Arriving at the finale's celebrated (ex-BBC *Panorama*) fanfare, we find the inverted commas still rather deliberately placed where others power on.

In the absence of a major interpretative rethink, the strings swell and swirl with what feels like idiomatic fervour and the brass-playing is enthusiastic. There's no suggestion that the special bond between this conductor, his orchestra and his audience has atrophied over time.

An eager though gesturally awkward presence on the podium in what was then his 79th year, he has given us a persuasive souvenir of his live music-making, albeit one shorn of applause. We are promised the other symphonies and the *Symphonic Dances* in due course; but couldn't we have been given more than 43 minutes here? **David Gutman**

*Selected comparisons:*

RCO, Ashkenazy (7/96) (DECC)

448 116-2DF2 or 455 7982

Hungarian Nat PO, Kocsis (11/04) (BMC) BMCCD101

Sydney SO, Ashkenazy (4/09) (EXTO) EXCL00018

### Saint-Saëns · Grieg · Liszt

**Grieg** Lyric Pieces<sup>a</sup>: Op 12 - No 5; No 6; Op 43 - No 2; No 4; Op 54 No 1 **Liszt** Hungarian Rhapsodies, S244<sup>a</sup> - No 5; No 10 **Saint-Saëns** Piano Concerto No 2, Op 22<sup>b</sup>

**Nelson Freire** pf<sup>b</sup> **Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra** / **Ádám Fischer**

Audite <sup>a</sup>mono © AUDITE95 742 (55' • <sup>a</sup>ADD/<sup>b</sup>DDD)

Recorded <sup>a</sup>1966; <sup>b</sup>live at the Haus des Rundfunks, Berlin, March 16, 1986



Nelson Freire hasn't made a commercial recording of Saint-Saëns's Second Piano

Concerto, which makes this radio recording from 1986 all the more fascinating. In the piano's rhapsodic solo opening he combines freedom with a sense of purpose, though ensemble isn't always entirely precise between him and Ádám Fischer's orchestra, and the piano sound can be a touch muddy in the bass register. Despite this, Freire can make something as simple as an arpeggio sound ravishing and the sense of fantasy is everywhere apparent. He takes a freer approach than Grosvenor and Hough in the *scherzando* second movement. But it is in the finale that Freire is most impressive, dispatching its considerable virtuosity with flair, from pounding octaves to highly delicate textures, the closing moments suitably tumultuous.

The solo pieces on this disc were recorded when Freire was only 21 and have not been previously released. How good it is to have a selection of Grieg's *Lyric Pieces*, which are vividly rendered. If the 'Solitary traveller' (Op 43 No 2) is still more forlorn in Stephen Hough's hands, Freire's 'Little

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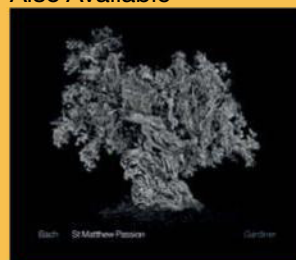
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bird' (Op 43 No 4) is set free by the lightest of pedalling and a scampering virtuosity (Andsnes is more sustained – both are compelling). The colourful 'Norwegian Melody' (Op 12 No 6) moves from stamping rhythms to a darting, shifting idea, though Andsnes is arguably even more effective here, making more of its folkish qualities at a faster tempo. Freire's 'Shepherd Boy' (Op 54 No 1) is a highlight, conjuring a palpable sense of loneliness, of vast unpeopled vistas.

Freire's Liszt has always had a nobility to it and the pieces here are no exception. If he can't quite match the darkness of Cherkassky (c1946) in the Fifth *Hungarian Rhapsody* – a searing reading whose sense of purpose glows through the crackle of the recording – it is still remarkable for its gravity, while the 10th is entirely without garish showmanship, Freire's panache with its glissandos a joy to behold. In the Second Polonaise, too, we find muscularity and finesse in perfect balance. A fine addition to the Freire discography. **Harriet Smith**

*Saint-Saëns* – selected comparisons:

Hough, CBSO, Oramo (11/01) (HYPER) CDA67331/2

Grosvener (11/12) (DECC) 478 3527DH

Grieg Lyric Pieces – selected comparisons:

Andsnes (6/93, 4/02) (VIRG/ERAT) 232286-2 &

(EMI/WARN) 557296-2 (oas)

Grieg Op 43 Nos 2 & 4 – selected comparison:

Hough (6/15) (HYPER) CDA68070

Liszt Hungarian Rhapsody No 5 – selected comparison:

Cherkassky (VAL) VALA1066

Liszt Hungarian Rhapsody No 10 – selected comparison:

Arrau (12/96) (SONY) MHK62338

## Sawyers

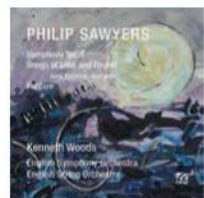
Symphony No 3<sup>a</sup>. Songs of Loss and Regret<sup>b</sup>.

Fanfare<sup>c</sup>

<sup>b</sup>April Fredrick sop <sup>a</sup>English Symphony Orchestra;

<sup>c</sup>English String Orchestra / Kenneth Woods

Nimbus Alliance © NI6353 (67' • DDD • T/T)



Philip Sawyers's Third Symphony (2015) is undoubtedly one of the finest British

symphonies of recent years. It was premiered for this recording in February this year and repeated at a memorable concert at St John's Smith Square, a few days later, as part of the English Symphony Orchestra's 21st-Century Symphonies programme. The design is relatively conventional, four movements with scherzo placed third (as in No 1; 2/11), unlike the compelling single-span Second (10/14). The long, visionary *Adagio* is its emotional heart, music of searing intensity, yet the expressive fulcrum lies rather in the Arnold-

like Intermezzo, full of disarming charm and gentle humour, adjusting the context of the whole. The impact is overwhelming, on a par with Pickard's Fifth (BIS, A/17) or David Matthews's Seventh (Dutton, 6/14) – Matthews's Ninth is next on the ESO's list. The performance is terrific, and terrifically committed, superbly marshalled by Kenneth Woods.

The eight *Songs of Loss and Regret* (2013), commemorating the centenary of the First World War and the victims of its carnage, are movingly sung by April Fredrick (fresh from her triumph as Joubert's Jane Eyre), and just as movingly accompanied by the ESO strings. The fifth song, 'Futility', serves to mark Sawyers's stature as a composer: the same Owen sonnet as memorably set by Britten in the *War Requiem*, I aver that Sawyers's is the profounder of the two. Finally comes the meaty *Fanfare* (2016) – really a motet for orchestral brass. Great music, great performances and great sound from Nimbus, engineered by Simon Fox-Gál.

**Guy Rickards**

## R Strauss

Oboe Concerto<sup>a</sup>. Serenade, Op 7<sup>b</sup>.

Sonatina No 2, 'Fröhliche Werkstatt'<sup>b</sup>

Alexei Ogrintchouk ob<sup>a</sup>/dir Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra / <sup>a</sup>Andris Nelsons  
BIS © BIS2163 (74' • DDD/DSD)



A tempting prospect: a programme of Richard Strauss played by the Royal Concertgebouw

Orchestra and featuring, in the Oboe Concerto, the Concertgebouw's own principal oboe, Alexei Ogrintchouk, conducted by the 21st century's most instinctive Straussian, Andris Nelsons. And as Ogrintchouk pours out the blossoming lines of Strauss's opening paragraph, the first impressions are encouraging: a rich but focused tone, a melodic give-and-take that feels simultaneously playful and expressive, and Nelsons and the orchestra closely in accord. This is, make no mistake, a fine performance, with orchestral playing that's strikingly crisp and alert but spacious too (listen to how Nelsons and Ogrintchouk jointly pace the long sunset fade from about 7'00" in the slow movement).

And yet something doesn't feel entirely right, and I suspect it's the recorded balance. With Ogrintchouk very much front and centre, details of Strauss's intricate string textures don't quite come through, *tuttis* can jump out with a jolt and even the playful woodwind-and-soloist

dialogues in the first movement lack the chamber-music feeling you get from, say, Heinz Holliger and the COE (though some may prefer Ogrintchouk's altogether creamier tone).

The balance is similarly skewed towards the top in the two works for wind ensemble – a real pity with a horn sound as luscious as the Concertgebouw's. Ogrintchouk directs a staid account of the youthful Serenade, Op 7, before practically tumbling into the late Sonatina: never less than elegantly played but lacking both the characterisation and the Wagnerian scope of Nicholas Daniel's recent Aldeburgh version. I'd love to have heard Nelsons conduct these pieces. But as you'd expect from these players, any criticism starts from a high base – and straight, musicianly Strauss might be exactly what you're after. **Richard Bratby**

*Sonatina* – selected comparison:

Aldeburgh Strgs, N Daniel (7/17) (LINN) CKD538

*Concerto* – selected comparison:

Holliger, COE (PHIL) 466 105-2

## Szymanowski • Karłowicz

Karłowicz Violin Concerto, Op 8 Szymanowski

Violin Concertos – No 1, Op 35; No 2, Op 61

Tasmin Little vln

BBC Symphony Orchestra / Edward Gardner

Chandos © CHSA5185 (73' • DDD/DSD)



Three violin concertos – all Polish but all very different in mood – make up

this latest release from Tasmin Little.

Programmed last on the disc, but composed first, is the concerto by Mieczysław Karłowicz, a big, romantic concerto very much in the mould of Tchaikovsky. The opening horn motif even echoes that of Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto, albeit in reverse.

Little has recorded the Karłowicz before (wonderfully) in 2003 as part of Hyperion's Romantic Violin Concerto series. Her playing is just as strong here, with meaty staccato double-stopped passages, but it's not all show; she is sensitive to dynamics too. Nigel Kennedy is more self-indulgent in his recording, although the earthiness and drama he brings to it is compelling. Tasmin Little trills exquisitely in the stratosphere to close the second movement, while the finale dances joyously. The BBC Symphony Orchestra, under the astute direction of Edward Gardner, offer keen support, particularly some lovely woodwind flecks of colour to the yearning Romanza slow movement. Chandos's recording, in a reverberant acoustic, is



Lithe and poised: Mark Elder and the Hallé Orchestra reach the fifth instalment in their Vaughan Williams symphony cycle

much beefier than Hyperion's, which is not always an advantage in orchestral climaxes.

Karłowicz died young, caught in an avalanche in the Tatra Mountains in 1909, the same mountains where Karol Szymanowski and his muse, the Polish violinist Paweł Kochański, spent the summer in 1932. It was there that Szymanowski sketched the initial ideas for his Second Violin Concerto. I heard Little and Gardner make a great case for this work at the Barbican earlier this year, presumably at the time of the Chandos recording sessions. Little really digs into the folk-like first movement, almost Bartókian in its fiddles and drones, with its fierce double-stopping and muscular cadenza – written by Kochański – coming off splendidly. Kochański had also been the inspiration for the First, highly perfumed and exotic in feel, composed at a time when Szymanowski was heavily influenced by Arabic culture. Little's lustrous tone and ethereal top notes are bathed in an orchestral accompaniment that glitters and glistens, while there is fire and ice in the brief cadenza that opens the final section of the work. Her Szymanowski is as fine as Thomas Zehetmair's, long the benchmark recording of these two concertos; but, with the Karłowicz thrown in, this makes a highly recommendable alternative. **Mark Pullinger**

*Karłowicz – selected comparisons:*

*Kennedy, Polish CO, Kaspszyk*

(11/07) (EMI/WARN) 379934-2

*Little, BBC Scottish SO, Brabbins (HYPE) CDA67389*

*Szymanowski – selected comparison:*

*Zehetmair, CBSO, Rattle (8/96) (EMI) 555607-2*

## Vaughan Williams

Symphonies – No 4<sup>a</sup>, No 6<sup>b</sup>

**Hallé Orchestra / Sir Mark Elder**

Hallé © CDHLL7547 (65' • DDD)

Recorded live at The Bridgewater Hall, Manchester,

<sup>a</sup>April 7, <sup>b</sup>November 10, 2016



The fifth instalment in Mark Elder's Vaughan Williams symphony cycle launches with a strikingly lithe, poised and painstakingly prepared reading of the Sixth, culminating in a superbly controlled, raptly questing Epilogue which (for once) unfolds at a true *pianissimo* throughout. Elsewhere, the Scherzo has contrapuntal and rhythmic acuity in its favour – although the Trio's glowering reprise at fig 39 (5'29'') doesn't chill to the marrow as it can. Nor does the first movement's opening maelstrom register with ideally elemental force and fury, while the Hallé strings are lacking

something in sheer breadth of tone for the secondary material's final full flowering from one after fig 15 (6'24''). The ensuing *Moderato*, too, falls just a little short in terms of ratcheting tension and remorseless tread (Elder takes it at a swifter tempo than some might like).

Overall, one admires without being truly swept away – an observation that extends to this new Fourth. Again, the orchestral playing cannot be faulted in terms of discipline and composure – and the recording team have struck a commendably judicious balance within Bridgewater Hall – but, for all the scrupulous attention to detail, Elder's conception falls just a little short in terms of craggy power and cumulative thrust. Certainly, I crave an altogether more expectant *ppp* hush at the start of that Beethovenian transition into the finale, whose minatory *epilogo fugato* should surely harrow the senses more than it does here. On the plus side, Elder's lavish care pays particularly handsome dividends in the first movement's haunted *Lento* coda and the same material's devastatingly inevitable return at fig 13 (2'48'') in the finale. The slow movement, too, is extremely fine (the numerous *cantabile* markings tastefully observed – and a special word of praise for the sensitive flute solo at the close).



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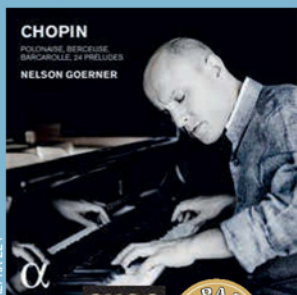
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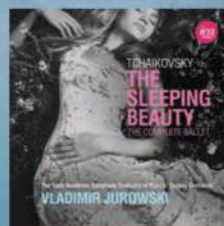
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BBC Radio 3 Record Review

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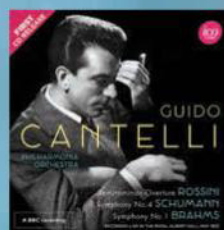
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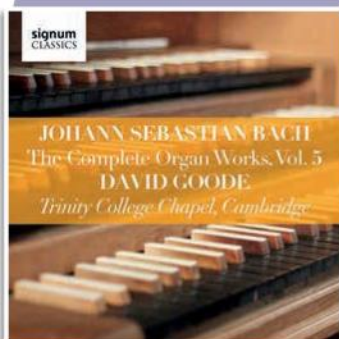
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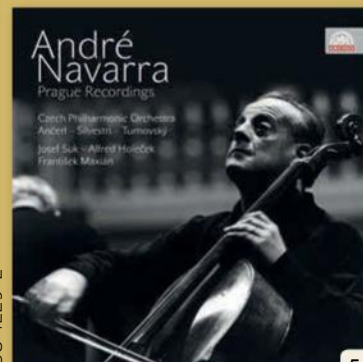
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Very impressive in parts, then, but not quite the whole story. My own long-standing loyalty to Boult (his mono versions for Decca), Handley (with the RLPO) and Haitink (both EMI/Warner) remains unchallenged. And don't overlook, either, those unforgettably incendiary Fourth under the composer (Naxos) and Barbirolli (Barbirolli Society), as well as Andrew Davis's exceptionally penetrating Sixth (Warner) – all with the BBC SO on blistering form. **Andrew Achenbach**

## 'Chopin Evocations'

**Barber** Nocturne, Op 33 **Chopin** Piano Concertos (orch Pletnev)<sup>a</sup> – No 1, Op 11; No 2, Op 21. *Fantaisie-impromptu*, Op 66. *Rondo*, Op *posth* 73<sup>b</sup>. *Variations on 'Là ci darem la mano'*, Op 2 **Grieg** *Hommage à Chopin*, Op 73 **No 5 Mompou** *Variations on a Theme by Chopin* **Schumann** *Carnaval*, Op 9 – No 12, **Chopin** **Tchaikovsky** *Un poco di Chopin*, Op 72 No 15 **Daniil Trifonov**, <sup>b</sup>**Sergei Babayan** *pfs*  
<sup>a</sup>**Mahler Chamber Orchestra / Mikhail Pletnev**  
DG (M) ② 479 7518; (M) ③ ● 479 8177  
(140' • DDD)



Daniil Trifonov's last release was an impressive and exhilarating two-disc programme of Liszt's *Studies* (10/16). It was an Editor's Choice and shortlisted for this year's *Gramophone* Awards. The only prize his latest recording will win is an egg from a curate – and a fairly hard-boiled one at that. There are already commercial releases of Trifonov in both Chopin concertos (No 1 on Dux, No 2 on Medici TV) and goodness knows how many on the DG label alone, but of all the dozens of versions of Op 21 I have listened to over the years, this latest is one of the most lacklustre. Both the orchestral and piano expositions seem devoid of purpose. This, however, is not just any orchestral exposition. This is the world premiere of the re-orchestration of the concerto by Mikhail Pletnev, one of several who, over the years, have felt that young master Chopin needs a lesson in how to use the resources available to the best advantage.

Having raised an eyebrow to the clarinet (instead of strings) as the leading opening voice, the limp first movement crawls home at 15'41" (the average is between 13'00" and 13'30") with little acknowledgement of Chopin's *maestoso*. This and several other moments make this performance *hors de combat* as a recommended recording. Listen to the horn note at 12'24" sounding like a bedside alarm clock, or the piano's two

bars of *dolcissimo* and *legatissimo* semiquavers in the slow movement (7'09") resembling the drips from a partially turned-off tap. The *brillante* passage after the *cor de signal* measures in the finale help redeem proceedings.

It is with this latter spirit that Trifonov approaches the *Variations on 'Là ci darem la mano'*, a rare opportunity to hear this played as a solo and quite possibly the finest ever committed to disc. With the orchestral interludes played on the piano, it turns the piece into a kind of 'Pictures at a Chopin Exhibition'. The way in which Trifonov executes Var 3 and the contrasting touch and dynamics he brings to the repeat is quite masterly. Some Chopin-inspired *morceaux* follow – inventive programming – but when you hear two of them (the Grieg and Tchaikovsky pieces) played by Jonathan Plowright on his 'Hommage à Chopin' disc (Hyperion, 4/10) you wonder who has the stronger affinity with this music.

On disc 2, after a tremendously vivacious account of the *Rondo* for two pianos with his erstwhile teacher Sergei Babayan, Trifonov is once more in thrall to Pletnev and his version of Chopin. The opening of the re-orchestrated E minor Concerto has all the energy of someone dragging themselves off the sofa after a heavy lunch. While there are passages thereafter where everything threatens to come to a standstill, things eventually pick up, just as they do in the F minor, and normal service is pretty much resumed. But then compare Trifonov's reverential Romance (11'06", against Argerich's 9'24" and Kissin's 8'26"), in which every note is squeezed dry, with Josef Hofmann's improvisatory ease and imagination (live in 1936). By and large, Pletnev's scoring is unobtrusive and does not overly distract, though the woodwind ensemble at the opening of the finale sounds like Chopin hijacked by Tchaikovsky. One thing is constant throughout and that is the sublimely wonderful sound Trifonov produces right through the register. When allied to the clarity and evenness of his fast passagework (2'09" to 4'52" in the finale, for instance) it makes one regret even more the exaggerations and excesses heard elsewhere.

The programme ends in the more intimate world of Mompou's *Chopin* *Variations* (the A major Prelude from Op 28), a consummate, unfussy reading, unlike the remarkably self-indulgent central section of the *Fantaisie-impromptu* (Op 66, not Op 6 as labelled) quoted in Mompou's Var 10 and which concludes these evocations. **Jeremy Nicholas**

## 'Serebrier Conducts Granados'

**Albéniz** *Mallorca*, Op 202 (arr Thomas-Mifune/Picazo). *Tango*, Op 165 No 2 (arr Roudebush) **Chapi** *El rey que rabió* – Nocturno **Granados** *Danzas españolas*, Op 37 – No 2, *Oriental* (arr Abeling); No 5, *Andaluza* (arr Farago). *Goyescas* – *Intermezzo* (arr JL Turina). *El himno de las muertas* (arr López-Chávarri). *Pequeña romanza* **Lamote de Grignon** *Lento expresivo* **Malats** *Impresiones de España* – *Serenata española* **Monasterio** *Andante religioso*. *Andantino expresivo* **Morera** *Desolació* **Tárrega** *Gran vals* (arr Yélamo). *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* (arr Krantz) **Toldrà** *Vistas al mar* – Nocturno  
**Concerto Málaga String Orchestra / José Serebrier**  
Somm Céleste (P) SOMMCD0171 (62' • DDD)



The title is something of a misnomer. José Serebrier and the Concerto Málaga,

founded in 1996, offer us not so much a disc of music by Granados as a collection of short works for strings by Spanish and Catalan composers active between the 1870s and 1940s. With the exception of Granados's own *Pequeña romanza*, written in 1912 for string quartet, everything included by Albéniz, Granados and Tárrega comes in the form of arrangements that add little to our understanding of the originals.

Strings thicken the delicacy of Granados's piano-writing, making the two excerpts from *Danzas españolas* unduly heavyweight, while *Pequeña romanza* loses some of its intimacy here. Albéniz and Tárrega survive the process fractionally better: Tárrega's *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* sounds curiously Impressionist, and Albéniz's *Tango* is nicely sultry. But if you care for Spanish music the real focus of interest lies in the original works for strings by some of the less familiar composers. The ultra-refined, late-Romantic sensibilities of Monasterio and Lamote de Grignon contrast sharply with Enric Morera's near-atonal *Desolació*, forceful and startling in its concentrated brevity.

Serebrier conducts with considerable poise, gets passionate in the *Goyescas* *Intermezzo* and brings genuine charm to the *Nocturno* from Chapí's *El rey que rabió*. A hint of abrasion in the Concerto Málaga's sound speaks volumes in *Desolació*, and prevents Monasterio's religious musings from becoming sentimental or cloying. The playing is accomplished, though the orchestra isn't always helped by the close, occasionally reverberant recording. **Tim Ashley**

# Monteverdi's 1610 Vespers

David Vickers meets conductor **John Butt** to discuss what might really be behind this work

Over the last decade, the Dunedin Consort has made an indelible mark on performance approaches to Bach and Handel, but their interpretation of the 1610 *Vespers* is the first time they have captured early 17th-century music on a recording. Director John Butt points out, 'We have performed a lot of earlier Baroque music before in our concert seasons – in particular Schütz and quite a lot of Monteverdi, both secular and sacred. There's a genealogical connection that almost feels like the roots of later Baroque music, but one of the most important distinctions in Monteverdi is the essential notion of *tactus*.' The Renaissance term for the measurement of musical beats first appeared in theoretical writings in the 1490s, and it was still being discussed in 1618 by Praetorius in his treatise *Syntagma musicum*. Butt explains: 'In a nutshell, how musicians understand the beats, pulse and proportions of time signatures in the 1610 *Vespers* can give them a huge metrical space in which to do all sorts of things. We've got some really wonderful singers, and one of the things that I find very striking is that they can use both tone and volume as a way of filling the whole space of the *tactus*, but also a variety of kinds of ornamentation. So it's that sense of every pair of beats giving the singers a sandpit to play in with countless opportunities for expression. I'm very lucky to be collaborating with musicians who are deeply immersed in Monteverdi's style but who also have a real sense of creativity within that style, and whose music-making is spontaneous and expressive. In a sense, my job is just to try to co-ordinate it and give it a trajectory in time.'

Considering Butt's own impressive track record for placing Bach's works within reconstructions of its original liturgical contexts, I express surprise that he has opted to reject that format when recording the very music that has attracted such speculative efforts more than any other. 'I suppose it's because various people have already tried various forms of liturgical reconstructions with the *Vespers*. A huge amount has been written speculating on possible origins of the various pieces in Mantua, and so on, but really we just don't know. Quite apart from that, it strikes me that the 1610 collection stands apart from any original context. Sometimes I grandly call it the first modern musical work – it's the first piece of music that's about itself. It's not serving a particular liturgical event – although with some tinkering it can do that spectacularly well – but it goes beyond that by commenting on the very process and traditions embedded within that event. The musical contours and juxtapositions within the 1610 collection



John Butt and the Dunedin Consort record the 1610 Vespers

clearly suggest that Monteverdi might have thought of it as an overall shape – not perhaps to be performed, but a virtual *Vespers* in his head. If you sing or imagine your way through this piece, it's almost as if you've been to a service without having actually been there. From this point of view, it seems as if Monteverdi is trying to sum up the impression or recollection of an experience – and the music becomes almost as much about *Vespers* as it actually is one.'

We look at pages in the score that contain musical moments ranging from modern Caccini-esque solo monodic 'concertos' to more old-fashioned Renaissance polyphony (and we agree that *Ave maris stella* is the purest juxtaposition of both old and new worlds within one movement). Our discussion leads inevitably to Monteverdi's professed theory of *prima prattica* (the old contrapuntal style) and *seconda prattica* (the modern progressive composer's arsenal of tricks to illustrate the meaning of poetic texts). Although Monteverdi used these terms in defence against the theorist Artusi's bitter complaints about some of his madrigals, it is not difficult to interpret how the subsequent 1610 publication relates to the controversy – although Butt has an interesting take on this. 'It's almost as if Monteverdi is sending up the debate. He's writing music that



## The historical view

**Don Bassano Cassola**

*Letter to Card Ferdinando Gonzaga, July 1610*

'Monteverdi is having printed ... psalms for Vespers of the Madonna, with various and diverse manners of invention and harmony – and all on a cantus firmus – with the idea of coming to Rome this autumn to dedicate them to His Holiness.'

**John Whenham**

*Monteverdi: Vespers (1610) (CUP: 1997)*

'It is precisely this aspect of the 1610 *Vespers* – as a well-organised portfolio designed to demonstrate Monteverdi's invention and craftsmanship – that justifies performing them nowadays as though they were a concert work.'

**Jeffrey Kurtzman**

*The Monteverdi Vespers of 1610: Music, Context, Performance (OUP: 1999)*

'The variety of sources from which [he] has drawn and the constantly changing manner in which he has combined his materials are truly astonishing. Cohesion and diversity ... brought together in a dynamic synthesis.'

has *prima prattica* integrity (particularly the six-part *a cappella* Mass setting), but the psalms, concertos, the Trinitarian motets, the sonata and the hymn that constitute the so-called 1610 *Vespers* all take you through so many different styles and stylistic rulebooks within just a few minutes – or seconds, even! It's almost as if he's trying to render the whole argument redundant. He can write music that's quite brilliant and original in its own right, but which has all the contrapuntal skill and expressive flexibility happening at the same time – he's transcending the rulebook.' Butt hopes this key element emerges in his performances: 'The notion of relating the music-making absolutely to 16th-century counterpoint and style means that it's almost as if you're beginning to learn the rules of counterpoint just as you're beginning to test them, so you both break and flout the rules while you're simultaneously showing them. So it's about giving the listener this sense of real order, but being pushed to its limits.'

As we animatedly enthuse about the musical contents of Monteverdi's various pieces, we peruse several different editions of the score: I consult the Oxford edition by Jeffrey Kurtzman (the leading authority on the complex and often misunderstood 1610 publication), whereas Butt has brought

*It's about giving the listener this sense of order, but being pushed to its limits*

along Uwe Wolf's more recent Carus edition based on surviving copies of the original printed partbooks. For the actual recording, the consort used sensible practical performing material by Clifford Bartlett, but it is obvious that Butt spent considerable time studying various available versions of the score. 'Kurtzman is the best edition overall because he's the best-informed scholar in the world on the work, but it does have one awkward corner in the middle of the *Sonata sopra Sancta Maria* where he silently changes the notation for a proportional change of time signature, and I think he's slightly fudged it; I think it should be notated in minims.' Butt leans over, instantly shows me the questionable passage in the score, then shows me the same passage notated 'correctly' in his copy. 'I also looked at all of the original 1610 partbooks (they're all online nowadays), and very interesting and puzzling they are too.' I suggest whether some of those enigmatic puzzles in the original print are less indicative of Monteverdi's intentions or practices, and more a consequence of the Venetian publisher Amadino's errors or inconsistency. 'Yes, absolutely – although there are plenty of things that are reasonably clear. It's just that we've had this whole tradition of how the *Vespers* has been edited and performed since the 1940s which clouds our perceptions. If we just came to the 1610 print as a new piece with the scholarly knowledge that we now have about early 17th-century performance practice and notation – and, of course, also late 16th-century music – we would look at all sorts of obvious essential issues as a starting point. We wouldn't have huge breakneck extremes in tempos or the grand oratorio-style interpretations in our consciousness. One of the things I tried to do over the nine months or so that this project was in gestation – in fact, we didn't know we were going to record it when we were already performing it – was to avoid listening to any other recordings at all. I just read and looked at the score afresh, just to see what decisions I would make if I could forget I'd ever heard the piece before.' 6

► Read our review of the Dunedin Consort's recording of the *Vespers* on page 85

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# Chamber



Pwyll ap Siôn embraces the music of Australian composer Cat Hope: *'Hope has evolved a style that supersedes the notion of genre, drawing together mainstream avant-garde and experimental traditions'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 62**



Charlotte Gardner explores the fugue with the Armida Quartet: *'The Armidas aren't shy of sanding off some of their polish when occasion deserves'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 66**

## Brahms

**'Brahms on the Piano, Vol 3'**  
Cello Sonatas – No 1, Op 38; No 2, Op 99  
**Jozef Lupták** vc **Ivo Varbanov** pf  
ICSM/Omnia © ICSM008 (53' • DDD)

## Brahms

Cello Sonatas – No 1, Op 38; No 2, Op 99.  
Hungarian Dance, WoO1 No 20 (arr Piatti).  
Vier ernste Gesänge, Op 121 (arr Shafran)  
**Bartholomew LaFollette** vc **Caroline Palmer** pf  
Champs Hill © CHRCD134 (74' • DDD)



Jozef Lupták and Ivo Varbanov's recording of the E minor First Sonata begins well. They step steadily, almost stealthily, through the expository section of the first movement, allowing the dark emotions to gradually gather strength. In the development, however, the Slovakian cellist's tone becomes increasingly strained and whiny. Listen at 7'42", where his churning figuration sounds like the howl of heavy machinery. There's a leaden feeling to the minuet-like second movement, too – with further (albeit more plaintive) whingeing in the Trio – and the finale lacks both textural clarity and rhetorical punch.

The F major Second Sonata fares somewhat better. While there's insufficient vivacity in the opening *Allegro vivace* or passion in the duo's lurching rendition of the scherzo-like *Allegro passionato*, the *Adagio* is quite affecting. Indeed, Varbanov's lucid expressivity nearly steals the scene. In the finale, Lupták's intonation sometimes goes astray, but the air of warm geniality generated by both players is delightful.

In terms of technical finesse and interpretative insight, however, Bartholomew LaFollette and Caroline Palmer's performances are on another plane entirely. The British-American cellist's supple phrasing, variegated tone

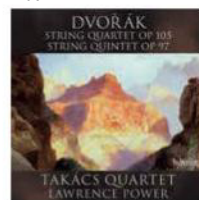
and sensitivity to harmonic incident draw one directly into the music's interior drama. Note, for example, how LaFollette suggests heightened vulnerability in the exposition repeat of Op 38's opening movement (at 3'21") and, later, how he and Palmer transform that movement's coda into a kind of heart-rendingly tender lullaby. In the fugal finale they convey both diligence and ferocity, although they are overly cautious in the *Più presto* at the work's end, denying us that last adrenalin rush.

Where the E minor Sonata is darkly lit and melancholic, the F major Sonata is boldly ardent. LaFollette and Palmer revel in the distinction, occasionally sacrificing precision for surging emotion in the more tumultuous passages of the latter. It's a pity that in the initial phrases of the first movement a few of the cello's key melodic peaks are inaudible. LaFollette is admirably meticulous in following Brahms's markings, but here his rendering of the hairpin dynamics is overzealous. Palmer is equally conscientious, mind you, except in the main subject of the third movement, which she plays in a brittle staccato despite Brahms's request for *legato*.

Between the two sonatas we're given extras. Piatti's arrangement of the 20th *Hungarian Dance* is played soulfully by LaFollette, with some effectively expressive octave doublings not in the printed score. More impressive still is Daniil Shafran's transcription of the *Vier ernste Gesänge*. Whatever is lost in the declamatory fervour of the vocal original is made up for in lyrical generosity here. The opening song is mournful in a way that links Brahms with Mussorgsky, for example, while the central section of the final song offers a most consolatory benediction. Shafran's own recording of his arrangement is out of print, alas, but his extremely personal, profoundly affecting version of the sonatas has been reissued by Melodiya. LaFollette and Palmer's interpretations are not quite as individual, perhaps, but will likely have wider appeal. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

## Dvořák

String Quartet No 14, Op 105 B193.  
String Quintet No 3, 'American', Op 97 B180<sup>a</sup>  
**Takács Quartet** with <sup>a</sup>**Lawrence Power** va  
Hyperion © CDA68142 (65' • DDD)



The pairing of the Takács Quartet and viola player Lawrence Power has already

proved a winning one in Brahms and the results are no less seductive in Dvořák, with a recording that brings them up close and personal.

The ebb and flow of the Quintet's first movement unfolds with complete naturalness and if at times there's a sense that climaxes could be lush-toned, the detailing and interplay are beyond reproach. The second movement is one of the highlights – the Raphael, while good, are not as silky-toned, and the way the Takács and Power use vibrato as an expressive device rather than a default position is one of the many pleasures of their playing. The Škampa are more overly folksy here, tending to make the accents sharper, but how beautifully the first viola on this new disc launches the minor-key melody of the Trio section. There's an intensity to the slow movement that puts me in mind of the Takács's recordings of late Beethoven, compared to which the Škampa are more straightforwardly warm-hearted. The variations that follow are vibrantly coloured and intimately voiced, the shadows finally dispatched in the rumbustious finale.

The Op 105 Quartet, begun in America but finished in Prague, likewise impresses from the start, the minimal vibrato giving the opening a real sense of portent. Occasionally I hankered after more drive through the *Allegro appassionato* but in the Takács's hands the delightful *Molto vivace* second movement has supreme lightness – the four players demonstrating that innate lightning-quick reflex that you find in the greatest quartets. Their Trio is also

intoxicating, as is the way they move from this back into the opening furiant (from 3'59") – a masterclass of subtle inevitability. The Hagen are perhaps less subtle, tending to bite into accents more vigorously. The slow movement is given all the space it needs, even if it's possible to imagine a still-warmer sound quality characteristic of home-grown Czech groups. The minor-key middle section, in which the melody is passed from first violin to fruity viola against throbbing cello backdrop, is, however, given with due intensity. As we return to the major-key main idea, they delight anew in its chirruping playfulness. The Takács relish, too, the skitteringly dramatic opening to the finale before it sets off its jolly discourse (though listen to the Smetana Quartet here for a more *echt* Czech sound). This is a movement that can, in the wrong hands, sound discursive – but not here, and the Takács's way with the close brings a suitably uplifting ending to an entrancing disc.

**Harriet Smith**

*'American' Quintet – selected comparisons:*

*Raphael Ens (8/89\*) (HYPE) CDH55405*

*Škampa Qt, Chorzelski (8/17) (CHAM) CHRC110*

*Quartet No 14 – selected comparisons:*

*Hagen Qt (6/01) (DG) 469 066-2GH*

*Smetana Qt (TEST) SBT1075*

## Eben

Piano Trio<sup>a</sup>. String Quartet, 'The Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart'<sup>b</sup>.

Piano Quintet<sup>c</sup>

<sup>ac</sup> **Karel Košárek** *pf*

<sup>bc</sup> **Martinů Quartet** (<sup>a</sup>Lubomír Havlák, Libor Kaňka

<sup>vns</sup> Zbyněk Paďourek <sup>va</sup> Jitka Vlašánková <sup>vc</sup>)

Supraphon © SU4232-2 (69' • DDD)



For all that Petr Eben – former president of the Prague Spring

Festival – was perhaps the most highly respected composer in post-communist Czechoslovakia, his music has yet to achieve the international acclaim it deserves. Appointed organist of St Vitus Church in Český Krumlov at the age of 10, he specialised in composing music for his instrument, much of it inspired by his Catholicism. But he also embraced practically every genre besides, accruing some 200 works altogether by his death in 2007. This new Supraphon release, then, is particularly welcome, venturing beyond Eben's more familiar organ music to showcase his equally affecting but relatively little-known chamber output.



Technical finesse and interpretative insight: Bartholomew LaFollette and Caroline Palmer excel in Brahms

The result is as memorable for its textural complexity as it is for its moments of haunting sparseness; for its spiky modernism as it is for its forays into neoclassicism, Gregorian chant and the world of Slavic folk. In short, it's a sound world that constantly eludes categorisation, nowhere more obviously than in its emotional colouring.

How, for example, to pin down the String Quartet? Subtitled *The Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart*, this 1981 work starts by evoking Bartók's gnarliest music: its melodic angularity, knotted textures and rhythmic punch.

But what follows is so pared down, so unstinting with its warm, consonant harmonies, that one almost struggles to believe it was composed by the same hand. The Piano Trio of 1986 goes further: this music can laugh and cry simultaneously, thanks to Eben's ability to endow every textural layer with its own personality. But what is most remarkable is the economy with which Eben amplifies those personalities, a talent that pays dividends in his 1992 Piano Quintet. Not a note in this – the grittiest, most uncompromising piece on the disc – is wasted.

The Martinů Quartet give all three works the flexibility they demand, tracing their angular contours like a musical cardiogram. Meanwhile Karel Košárek does full justice to the capricious piano parts. There is real vigour and enthusiasm here, reminding us that this is not punishing contemporary music to be held at arm's length, but simply music.

Hannah Nepil

## I Holst

Phantasy Quartet. Duo for Viola and Piano. String Trio No 1. The Fall of the Leaf. Sonata for Violin and Cello. String Quintet

Simon Hewitt Jones, David Worswick *vns*

Tom Hankey *va* Oliver Coates, Thomas

Hewitt Jones *vcs* Daniel Swain *pf*

NMC © NMCDD236 (75' • DDD)

From Court Lane Music CLM37601 (3/09)



This is a delightful, intelligently programmed disc, charting the

development of a composer known more as a famous composer's daughter (and another's sometime assistant – Britten's, at Aldeburgh) than as a serious creator in her own right.

Reissued by NMC with a new dust cover but essentially the disc reviewed by Jeremy Dibble in March 2009, the programme is framed by the early Cobbett Prize-winning *Phantasy Quartet* (1928), very much in the pastoral tradition of the time, and the late, almost impressionistic String Quintet (1982), written just two years before Imogen Holst's death. The four intervening works reveal the various styles and techniques she investigated over time, disposed on the disc to maximise textural contrast.

By 1930 she had begun to absorb French models, her marvellous Sonata for violin and cello undoubtedly influenced by Ravel's from 1922. A leaner, starker tone haunts the wartime String Trio No 1 (1944), which battles between E and C, and the Duo for viola and piano (1968) where dodecaphony, rooted in C, is touched on. Yet always, as in the three short solo cello studies *The Fall of the Leaf* (1962), her own quiet voice is discernible. Terrific performances and sound; I've had it on loop. Guy Rickards

## Hope

'Ephemeral Rivers: Chamber Works'

Miss Fortune X<sup>a</sup>. Cruel and Usual<sup>b</sup>. Broken Approach<sup>c</sup>. Dynamic Architecture<sup>d</sup>. Sogno 102<sup>a</sup>

<sup>b</sup>Zachary Johnston, <sup>b</sup>Lizzy Welsh *vns*

<sup>b</sup>Phoebe Grey *va* <sup>b</sup>Judith Hamman *vc*

<sup>d</sup>Mark Cauvin *db* <sup>b</sup>Samuel Dunscombe *elec*s

<sup>c</sup>Vanessa Tomlinson *perc* <sup>a</sup>Decibel

HatHut © HATNOWART200 (56' • DDD)



Alongside Liza Lim, almost her exact contemporary,

composer Cat Hope (b1966) has emerged as one of Australia's most exciting and individual creative voices. However, whereas Lim has recently moved towards large-scale compositions for extended forces, Perth-based Hope continues to produce small-scale, open-ended works for chamber-like configurations. Reflecting her ongoing work with the Australian new music ensemble Decibel, which she founded in 2009, Hope has evolved a style that supersedes the notion of genre, drawing together mainstream avant-garde and experimental traditions, acousmatic music and sonic design, noise, found objects and extended improvisation, post-rock and ambient in contexts that often fuse music with film, video and installation.

The five pieces included here were all composed between 2011 and 2015 and represent what Hope herself has described as 'a nexus of electronic and acoustic instruments, animated notations, drone and noise'. Christopher Fox notes in his excellent introduction that, while all five may fall under the category of chamber music, in every case 'the sonic resources of acoustic instruments are located within a musical frame that includes other elements'.

These 'other elements' are as wide as they can be varied. For example, in the queasy, claustrophobic *Cruel and Usual*, live electronics create sonic extensions of the instruments themselves: the sounds of a live string quartet are sampled then either distorted or repositioned in much lower registers.

At other times, acoustic sounds are juxtaposed with electronically generated ones. In *Miss Fortune X* – whose autobiographical title refers to a radio-controlled model airplane built by Hope's father – a gentle aviationary soundscape is generated by combining glissandos on viola and cello, sustained timbres on percussion, drones produced from playing and strumming inside the piano in addition to sonic colourations of AM radio static.

In Hope's homage to Giacinto Scelsi, *Sogno 102*, live electronics disturb the music's acoustic surface.

Hope's main aim is often to 'get inside' the sounds themselves, as heard on the most recent work on display, *Dynamic Architecture* for scordatura double bass and electronics, whose microscopic scrutiny reveals the instrument's rich harmonic spectra, all of which suggests that the ephemeral rivers of this remarkable composer run deep indeed. Pwyll ap Siôn

## Schoenberg

String Quartets – No 2, Op 10<sup>b</sup>; No 4, Op 37

<sup>a</sup>Malin Hartelius *sop* Gringolts Quartet

BIS © BIS2267 (65' • DDD/DSD)



If it's too easy to discuss Schoenberg's Fourth Quartet in terms of Haydn with

wrong notes, the Gringolts nonetheless helpfully encourage the comparison with playing that outlines its structural contours with an architect's coloured pencils. No more or less deformed than in mature Brahms, sonata form is a clear underlying principle of the first movement, if that's what you want to hear. And if you actively want the nippy little Scherzo to haunt your dreams like a short story of Sartre in a room without a door, or a forest without a path, then let the Juilliard and LaSalle ensembles respectively be your discomfiting companions.

This movement and the finale usually feel more garrulously extended even if, or because, their forms are more readily parsed, but it's a tribute to the Gringolts Quartet's unanimity and palpable sense of purpose that there is water among the rock. This is found at a small cost to the Austro-German principle of a quartet unfolding as an argument between four distinct personalities. Gringolts is not one of those fly-in, fly-out celebrity leaders, and his quartet has now been playing together for a decade.

The fruits of their work have ripened in this intensely sympathetic account of the Second Quartet. Just a ghost of Russian old-school, high-intensity vibrato haunts the second movement's parody of 'O, du lieber Augustin', before the expression broadens without relaxing into the burning fires and open wounds of 'Litanei'. Even at the movement's searing conclusion the Gringolts take care not to overstate their case, though for a more fully voluptuous, Straussian relish of the imagery, I am still holding out for Renée Fleming to join the Emersons as an imaginary ideal. Meanwhile the experience of Malin Hartelius singing Fiordiligi and *Figaro's* Countess serves her

very well for Schoenberg: her poise and finely drawn lines of phrasing are ideally scaled to the quartet's compact, Classical style. The Swiss radio studio recording for BIS is as open, airy and enlightening as are the performances themselves. **Peter Quantrill**

### 'Aus kaiserlicher Zeit'

'From Imperial Vienna'

**Haydn** Concerto for Violin, Piano and Orchestra, HobXVIII:6<sup>a</sup>. Violin Sonatas<sup>b</sup> - No 7, HobIII:82; No 8, HobIII:81 **Hummel** Rondo favori, Op 11 (arr Heifetz)<sup>c</sup> **Vivaldi** Concerto, RV565 - Larghetto (arr Heifetz)<sup>c</sup>

**Elena Denisova** vn **Alexei Kornienko** pf

**Gustav Mahler Ensemble**

Sony Classical © 88985 45814-2 (65' • DDD)

From <sup>b</sup>Gramola 98886 (r2009);

<sup>c</sup>Arte Nova 74321 72124-2 (r1999)



'Aus kaiserliche Zeit - From Imperial Vienna' implies a concept, juxtaposing the music of three composers of different generations and unearthing a common link. That this project also involves three recording venues over a period of almost 16 years makes one suspect that it's more of a mopping-up exercise and that any overarching theme

has been applied at a later stage - and, indeed, a little research shows that all but the concerto has been issued before. Haydn and Hummel assuredly lived and worked in the Vienna of the Habsburgs, while Vivaldi went there in 1740 for an ultimately unsuccessful operatic venture and died there the following year in abject poverty.

The Hummel and Vivaldi as presented here (both recorded in 1999) have less to do with imperial Vienna than with the rather later aesthetic of Jascha Heifetz, who popularised the former's *Rondo favori* and the slow movement of one of the latter's double concertos in his own arrangements. The Hummel is a show-off piece, while the Vivaldi is removed from its Venetian surroundings and transplanted into a harmonic sound world closer to Strauss or Elgar.

The Haydn sonatas, recorded in 2009, also masquerade under false pretences, being arrangements based on music from the Op 77 string quartets, presumably by Ferdinand David (minuets are omitted to make them three-movement sonatas). These are frankly the best music here and Elena Denisova is a spirited advocate, well matched by her pianist, Alexei Kornienko.

The double concerto is thus the only music here performed in its authentic state. The most recent of the recordings (2015),

it nevertheless has a strangely old-fashioned feel about it, the modern instruments and washy acoustic recalling analogue-era recordings by the likes of the ASMF. Better in this case to go for the recent version by violinist Riccardo Minasi and harpsichordist Maxim Emelyanychev with *Il Pomo d'Oro* on period instruments.

The documentation mentions only the concerto and makes no attempt to draw the threads of these disparate pieces together.

A missed opportunity, despite some reasonable performances. **David Thresher**

*Double Concerto - selected comparisons:*

Minasi, Emelyanychev, *Pomo d'Oro*

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Hazard Chase Limited



The Gringolts Quartet offer intensely sympathetic accounts of Schoenberg on BIS – see review on page 62

you might think you know what to expect from *The Clarinotts*. And yes, it's an entertaining programme, delivered with warmth and wit. But there's a bit more than just that going on here. Ernst Ottensamer and his sons Daniel and Andreas are principal players in the Vienna and Berlin Philharmonics. They're clarinet royalty, with a shared commitment to what they call 'the Viennese tradition of clarinet playing'.

So begin at the beginning, with Rainer Schottstädt's divertimento on *Don Giovanni*. The beauty of the trio's sound speaks for itself: dark and chocolatey at the bottom, sweet and fluid at the top, with a wonderfully easy way of curling around an ornament and just a hint of bitterness at the louder, higher extremes. What emerges as you listen on, though, is the subtlety with which they articulate Mozart's melodies: the naturalness of their phrasing, coupled to a sense of light and shade that clearly comes from knowing this music intimately – and understanding precisely how to make it speak.

That pays dividends in the unapologetically minor works that follow. The single-movement trio by Joseph Friedrich Hummel (no relation to Johann Nepomuk) bubbles deliciously, there's an engaging

wistfulness about Henry Ploy's *The Florist* and the harmless classical clichés of Druschetzky's eight tiny trios get the performance of a lifetime. The tougher nuts, meanwhile, are cracked with ease and considerable insight. The *Clarinotts* evidently relish the pungent harmonies and swirling, Mahlerian shadows of Alfred Prinz's *Scherzo fantastique* and find a Beckett-like bleakness in the whispered dissonances of Edison Denisov's *Two Pieces*. So don't be misled by the packaging. There's more than just marzipan in these Mozartkugeln.

**Richard Bratby**

### 'Contrasts'

'Impressions of Hungary'

**Bartók** *Contrasts*, Sz111 **Dohnányi** *Sextet*, Op 37

**Kurtág** *Hommage à R Sch*, Op 15d **Rózsa** *Solo*

*Clarinet Sonatina*, Op 27 **Serly** *Chamber Folk*

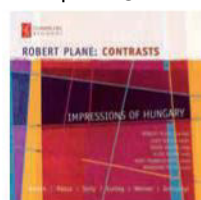
*Music Weiner Két Tétel (Two Movements)*

**Robert Plane** *cl* with **Alec Frank-Gemmill** *hn*

**Lucy Gould** *vn* **David Adams** *va* **Alice Neary** *vc*

**Benjamin Frith** *pf*

Champs Hill © CHRC132 (83' • DDD)



Robert Plane is always inquiring as to repertoire and his new disc surveys

almost six decades of Hungarian music, beginning with *Contrasts* (1938), which Bartók wrote for Benny Goodman, Joseph Szigeti and himself with the length of 12-inch 78rpm discs in mind. Incisive if a little reined in, this version is at its best in the central 'Relaxation' with its night-music overtones.

Of the shorter works that ensue, Miklós Rózsa's pert and economical *Sonatina* (1957) might surprise those who know this composer merely from his epic film scores, while *Chamber Folk Music* (1949) sees Tibor Serly handling his material with a resourcefulness akin to his realisation of Bartók's *Viola Concerto*. Very different in overall aesthetic, György Kurtág's *Hommage à R Sch* (1990) finds this composer at his most hermetic, the fleeting brevity of its first five numbers complemented by a final 'Abschied' with its fugitive withdrawal into silence. Quite a contrast with the *Two Movements* (1951) in which Leó Weiner underlines his attractively understated handling of folk music within modest and refined dimensions.

Finally, to Ernő Dohnányi and the *Sextet* (1935), which is his last substantial chamber work. As often in this composer's maturity, outwardly conventional formal design is belied by the dexterity of its motivic ideas as they evolve across and between

movements – the finale an extended coda to what went before as it rounds off matters with the deftest tonal sideslip.

Plane's musicianship is abetted throughout by that of his colleagues, the whole well served by lucid recorded sound and an insightful booklet note from Daniel Jaffé. Collecting such a programme by other means would not be easy; better simply to acquire this disc and enjoy.

Richard Whitehouse

## 'From Latin America to Paris'

**Debussy** Cello Sonata **Fauré** *Élégie*, Op 24

**Ginastera** Cinco Canciones populares

argentinas - **Triste** **Massenet** *Thaïs* - *Méditation*

**Piazzolla** *Oblivion* **Ponce** Cello Sonata. *Estrellita*

(arr Glaus). *Estrellita* (arr Heifetz) **Ravel** *Pièce en*

*forme de habanera* **Saint-Saëns** *Carnaval des*

*animaux* - *Le cygne* **Villa-Lobos** *O canto do*  
*cisne negro*

**Lionel Cottet** *vc* **Jorge Viladoms** *pf*

Sony Classical (P) 88985 43089-2 (74' • DDD)



This engaging disc finds Lionel Cottet, the Swiss-born principal cellist of the

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, teaming up with the Mexican pianist Jorge Viladoms for a French-South American musical dialogue in which everything comes in equivalent pairs. The cello sonatas by Debussy and Manuel Ponce, written roughly contemporaneously, are the main works, flanked by shorter couplings comparable in subject and mood. So Saint-Saëns's 'Le cygne' is juxtaposed with Villa-Lobos's *Song of the Black Swan*; Fauré's *Élégie* contrasts with the greater desolation of Ginastera's 'Triste'; and *Pièce en forme de habanera*, one of Ravel's forays into Latin American dance music, takes its place alongside Piazzolla's *Oblivion*. The *Thaïs* *Méditation* is out on a limb, though there are two arrangements of Ponce's *Estrellita*: the first, by Heifetz, is fairly straightforward; the second, by Gaspard Glaus, gradually morphs into an up-tempo jazz piece that forms a virtuoso encore at the disc's close.

The performances similarly depend upon contrasts and tensions between Cottet's ultra-refinement and Viladoms's extrovert dynamism. Ponce's unwieldy four-movement Sonata is piano-driven, its keyboard-writing strenuous, and Cottet takes a few moments to assert himself against Viladoms's bravado at the start, though the *Allegro alla maniera d'uno studio*, which forms the work's scherzo, is

wonderful in its intricate dexterity. In the Debussy, the polarities are reversed, and Cottet very much takes the lead in an interpretation that is all the more striking for its subtlety and restraint. Among the shorter pieces, Villa-Lobos's swan is particularly exquisite, and the pair's starkly novel way with Fauré's *Élégie*, from which every trace of sentimentality has been removed, serves as a reminder that we should never take such familiar music for granted. The recording itself, made in RTS's Geneva studios, is ideally warm and clear. Someone should have done something with the booklet notes, though, which get dates wrong and come in gruesome translator-ese.

Tim Ashley

## 'Fuga magna'

**JS Bach** *Die Kunst der Fuge*, BWV1080 -

*Contrapunctus I, IV & XI* **Beethoven** *Grosse*

*Fuge*, Op 133 **Goldberg** Sonata, DürG14<sup>a</sup>

**Hausmann** *Fuga prima. Fuga seconda* **Mozart**

*Adagio and Fugue*, K546 **A Scarlatti** *Sonata a*  
*quattro* No 4

**Armida Quartet** with <sup>a</sup>**Raphael Alpermann** *hpd*

AVI Music (P) AVI8553380 (59' • DDD)



Hands up all those wondering whether a recording devoted entirely to fugues

may have more than a whiff of scholarly seriousness about it. Well, this was a thought that crossed my own mind upon first sight of 'Fuga magna', even within the context of its decidedly light-hearted cover portrait, the Armidas presented as a rough-and-tumble of jostling bodies in place of the sharper silhouettes of previous albums.

As it turns out, though, the musical contents are neither academic nor desperately rough and tumble, much as the Armidas aren't shy of sanding off some of their polish when occasion deserves. Instead what we have here is a warm, loving and perceptive advocacy of the fugue.

The programme begins with the two earliest published German fugues for instrumental ensemble, written by Valentin Haussmann in around 1600. And it must be said that, as far as programme openers go, the *Fuga prima* is a cracker, tiptoeing cautiously and searchingly into being, before gradually and satisfyingly flowering out yet always retaining its air of almost mystical creation. The *Fuga seconda*, into which we slide almost imperceptibly, is no less a beauty in its sunnier (albeit still minor) folk-song-based climes.

As this 'seven-league-boot journey across the realm of fugue' moves onwards through the centuries, the impression builds of one single continuous arc of musical thought, with the Armidas' performance style subtly developing along the historical timeline, albeit always with their trademark fresh, incisive tone. So period-aware Scarlatti and Bach, then the Mozart ushering in a sweet-tinged Classical *Sturm und Drang*, before a new, rougher-edged human bite comes into play as their arc finally touches triumphantly down for Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge*. And what a climactic performance this Beethoven is; hardly tamed in its rawness, its barely tonal confusion of voices carrying a slender, Classical beauty of thought which has the effect of linking it right back to everything that has gone before. It's wonderful stuff. Truly one to both savour and admire.

Charlotte Gardner

## 'Garden Party'

**Christiansen** *Garden Party* **Grieg** *Five Lyric*

*Pieces* **Hannibal** *Dreams. Sunset Dance* **Lalo**

*Fantaisie norvégienne* **Nielsen** *Humoresque*

*Bagatelles*, Op 11

**Michala Petri** *rec* **Lars Hannibal** *gtr*

OUR Recordings (P) 6 220619 (58' • DDD/DSD)



With two highly contrasting album releases already under her belt

this year (the premiere recording of Sean Hickey's recorder concerto *The Pacifying Weapon*, and 'Brazilian Landscapes' with guitarist Daniel Murray and percussionist Marilyn Mazur), the only thing you can absolutely guarantee with Michala Petri is that whatever she does next she'll be doing very soon; the rate at which she brings out new recordings is nothing short of prolific and every one is entirely different to the last. As is 'Garden Party', a recital of nature-themed 'character pieces' recorded with her regular duo partner, the Danish guitarist Lars Hannibal, in celebration of what is now their 25-year performing relationship.

Rather fittingly for a disc honouring this collaborative 'home', the lion's share of its repertoire also lands Petri solidly on geographical home ground; the *Garden Party* of its title is a birdsong-inspired suite written in 1992 by her fellow Dane Asger Lund Christiansen, the programme opens with their compatriot Carl Nielsen's originally-for-piano *Humoresque*



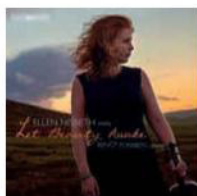
Warm, loving and perceptive: the Armida Quartet recording their fugue-inspired album for AVI Music

*Bagatelles*, and there are even two dreamily lilting vignettes by Hannibal himself. In fact, there's often a faintly dreamy, gentle quality to this programme, even in its perkier moments such as the 'Leaping Dance' and 'Elves' Dance' from Grieg's *Five Lyric Pieces* (neighbouring Norway being the other Nordic nation that gets a good shout). Combine that with the effortless symbiosis of these two veteran collaborators, and the fluidity and naturalness of Petri's playing itself, and it's all too easy simply not to register how virtuoso so much of this music is, even amid the swirling acrobatics of the *Presto* from Lalo's *Fantaisie norvégienne* or the dizzily whirling figures of Nielsen's 'The Spinning Top'.

Ultimately, I suspect you've got to be pretty signed up to the recorder per se, and in the market for something gentle and 'mood music'-esque, to genuinely fall for this album. However, it's beautifully played. **Charlotte Gardner**

### 'Let Beauty Awake'

**Britten** Solo Cello Suite No 3, Op 87. **Lachrymae**, Op 48 **Clarke** Viola Sonata **Vaughan Williams** Five Songs from 'Songs of Travel'. Romance **Ellen Nisbeth** va **Bengt Forsberg** pf  
BIS (F) BIS2182 (80' • DDD/DSD)



The brisk, march-like tread; the bracing swing of the melody: you might already know Vaughan Williams's 'The Vagabond', but you won't have heard it like this. The pianist is that wonderful chamber musician Bengt Forsberg and the 'singer' is the Swedish viola player Ellen Nisbeth, though her playing quickly parts company with Robert Louis Stevenson's words. It's ardent, headstrong and – coupled to Forsberg's sardonic accompaniment – surprisingly dark (you might almost say Mahlerian). Nisbeth has transcribed five of Vaughan Williams's *Songs of Travel* in total, and they form eloquent and appropriate interludes between the three major works on this disc: Britten's *Lachrymae* and Third Cello Suite (in Nisbeth's own arrangement) and the magnificent Viola Sonata by Rebecca Clarke.

Nisbeth's tone isn't especially lush or velvety but it's endlessly nuanced, and Forsberg, too, commands an enormously subtle tonal palette. If

the overall effect of this predominantly melancholy recital is of a moody, monochrome engraving or woodcut, it's no less poetic for it. And, as we've already heard, it's passionate too: they begin the Clarke in heroic style before broadening into a rhapsodic, wide-ranging reading (there's an almost pointillist quality to the flickering, fluid contrasts of light and dark that the pair find in its central scherzo).

Similarly, their *Lachrymae* has the freedom and questioning quality of an improvisation, though there's no mistaking the sense of arrival when Britten finally states the Dowland theme – just as the bold, luminous final procession of themes in the Third Suite's Passacaglia makes for a wholly convincing resolution to the contrasts of character and voice that Nisbeth has articulated so naturally throughout the earlier movements. Fresh, thoughtful perspectives on some ravishing – if sombre – repertoire.

**Richard Bratby**

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# Emil Gilels

**Boris Giltburg** pays glowing tribute to the breathtaking playing of his fellow pianist, which commands attention as much for the hypnotic effect of its rhythm as for its gilded tone

**E**mil Gilels (1916–85) has always been a personal hero for me. Without gimmicks or eccentricity, the all-encompassing warmth and deep humanity of his recordings strongly attracted me, and my admiration grew steadily as I discovered more of his discography. The Gilels I knew – the noble, poetic, profoundly serious musician – was, it turned out, just one side of him, that which was more readily apparent in his later-life recordings. The earlier recordings he made in the 1930s (available on both Naxos and DG, with better sound on the former) revealed a different interpreter. You can hear a fiery, fearless virtuoso, already noble in his sound, already on the search for the core of the music he was performing, but one, if I may say so, yet unencumbered by wisdom, with freshness and daring balancing his innate refinement and immaculate musical taste.

This was the time of his first two major breakthroughs: winning, as a hitherto unknown 16-year-old from Odessa, the first All-Union Performers' Competition in 1933 in Moscow; and winning the second Queen Elisabeth Competition (actually the first one for piano, and then named after Ysaÿe) in Brussels five years later. The first brought fame in the Soviet Union, the second marked the beginning of international fame, which was curtailed by the Second World War and had to wait until the 1950s and '60s to reach its zenith.

Some of his greatest performances come from those two

decades. Of these, Saint-Saëns's Second Piano Concerto with Cluytens (EMI/Warner Classics) is a masterpiece, with a tragic, artless narrative in the first movement; nuanced, delightfully elfin virtuosity in the second; and a veritable avalanche of sound in the finale which is dangerous, gripping and utterly thrilling. My other favourites include Beethoven's Fourth Concerto with Ludwig and the Philharmonia Orchestra (EMI), and Chopin No 1 with Kondrashin; this live version of the Chopin, reissued on Brilliant Classics, is much

superior to the studio recording with Ormandy, which is relaxed and even somewhat stately, while the former breathes, full of tangible emotion, with painfully beautiful phrasing in the first and second movements. Also not to miss are his performances of Medtner's sonatas in G minor (Naxos) and

A minor (a great live account from New York on EMI).

Gilels shows himself to be a passionate chamber musician on his many recordings in the 1950s with Leonid Kogan and Mstislav Rostropovich (available as a five-CD box-set

on Doremi), with whom he formed a very active trio. Their rendition of the *Archduke* Trio is legendary, but I'm repeatedly won over by their haunting interpretation of Shostakovich's Second Piano Trio, as well as by the Tchaikovsky A minor Trio, which is heartfelt, lyrical and impassioned without a shred of mawkishness.

I must mention Gilels's sound, 'golden' as it has often been called. His rich, full-bodied tone, always weighted and grounded, could become earthy or monotonous, if not for that lovely gleam that caps every single note, bell-like and clear. Gilels said how important it was to him for every note to speak, and this, he said, often dictated his choice of tempos. But just listen to his Liszt ('La campanella', the *Spanish Rhapsody*, any of the Hungarian Rhapsodies or, indeed, the B minor Sonata), and this combination of weight and gleam is present in every single note of the fastest figurations, which he is also able to imbue with directionality

and musical content – a breathtaking effect.

His rhythm immediately commands attention, too. Though flexible, it's mainly characterised by an inexorable pull forward, like being caught in the flow of a great river. The effect is often hypnotic: in Shostakovich's Second Sonata (RCA), in the shimmering piano arrangement of Debussy's 'Fêtes' (Naxos) or in his numerous Prokofiev recordings – the Third Concerto (an electrifying performance with Kondrashin), and the Second, Third and Eighth Sonatas.

*Though flexible, his rhythm is mainly characterised by an inexorable pull forward, like being caught in the flow of a great river*

## DEFINING MOMENTS

### • 1933 – *Fame in the Soviet Union*

Wins the first All-Union Performers' Competition in Moscow

### • 1938 – *International recognition*

Wins the Eugene Ysaÿe (now called the Queen Elisabeth) Competition in Brussels

### • 1945 – *Performances outside the Soviet Union*

For the first time, he gives recitals outside his native country

### • 1955 – *American debut*

First Soviet artist since the Second World War to tour in the US

### • 1969 – *Salzburg Festival Debut*

Recital of works by Beethoven, Prokofiev and Weber

### • 1972 – *Begins recording for DG*

His relationship with DG continued until his death, in 1985

### • 1981 – *A heart attack*

Suffers a heart attack, but continues to perform and record despite declining health. Last concert in September 1985; died a month later



In the 1970s and '80s Gilels recorded for Deutsche Grammophon, a collaboration which resulted in a series of gems: Grieg's *Lyric Pieces*, tender, sincere and touching; Brahms's Piano Quartet No 1 with the Amadeus Quartet (listen for the inspired poetry in the third movement and the exciting, driven finale played with daredevil abandon), as well as the two concertos with the Berlin Philharmonic and Eugen Jochum. Of these, No 2 is still unsurpassed in its breadth of vision and humanity; the tempo flexibility, sorely lacking in Gilels's earlier recording with Reiner, grants it a powerful emotional impact, and the poetry of the slow movement is once again breathtaking.

Gilels was also one of the greatest Beethoven interpreters of his time and it's truly unfortunate that a planned set of all 32 sonatas on DG remained incomplete at the time of his death, with five sonatas missing. But I'll admit that, for me, the studio versions were often surpassed by his many live recordings of the same works; these are scattered on various recital CDs made

throughout his life, though several have been issued together in a six-CD box-set on Brilliant, which also contains a very strong set of live Beethoven concertos with Masur. This is the case not only with Beethoven, but also with Schumann's First Sonata, Liszt's B minor Sonata, Tchaikovsky's First Concerto and so on. On stage, Gilels's playing was full of 'high-voltage' electricity, possessed of an inner tension and an immediacy gripping and captivating, allowing no escape. His artistry, so humane and warm-hearted, seemed to thrive on the contact with an audience and became intensified by the lack of a safety net. Luckily for us, many of his concerts were recorded and filmed; one of many standout recitals available

on DVD was filmed in 1971 in the Stiftskirche in Ossiach, Austria (DG). The programme of works by Mozart and Beethoven, with Schumann and Mendelssohn encores, seems to pass in a single, concentrated breath, and to spend 90 minutes in the company of Gilels remains one of my strongest, most memorable and most satisfying musical experiences. **G**

#### THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



**Grieg** Lyric Pieces  
Emil Gilels  
DG (3/75<sup>R</sup>)  
I keep coming  
back to this -  
there's poetry in  
every tone

# Instrumental



**Jed Distler welcomes a second Scarlatti volume from Angela Hewitt:**

*'An overall game plan governs the recital as a whole, which begins majestically and concludes in quiet desolation'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 75**



**Jeremy Nicholas admires the effervescent George Li on Warner:**

*'This is the kind of dextrous, bubbling, life-affirming performance that cannot help but lift the spirits'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 76**

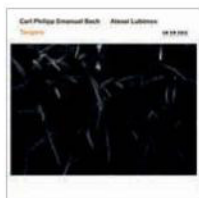
## CPE Bach

**G**

Clavierstück für die rechte oder linke Hand allein, Wq117 No 1 H241. Fantasias - Wq59 No 6 H284; Wq112 No 8 H146; Wq117 - No 8; No 11 H223; No 12 H224. Freye Fantasie, Wq67 H300. Keyboard Sonatas - Wq55 No 6 H187; Wq57 No 4 H208. Rondos - Wq59 No 4 H283; Wq61 No 4 H290. Solfeggios - Wq112 No 10 H147; Wq117 - No 2 H220; No 3 H221; No 4 H222

**Alexei Lubimov** *tangent pf*

ECM New Series Ⓢ 476 3652 (68' • DDD)



Think for a moment of a pianist equally at home with the French clavecinistes, Mozart,

Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, Brahms, Scriabin, Satie, Debussy, Silvestrov, Pärt, Ives, Cage, Schnittke, Webern and Gubaidulina, whose preference is to record their music on historically appropriate instruments, each of which he plays with breathtaking mastery. That perspicacious artist could only be Alexei Lubimov, who turns 77 this year. ECM has recently issued Lubimov's disc, recorded in 2008, of representative works by Emanuel Bach on a 1794 tangent piano by Späth & Schmahl of Regensburg.

The sound of this instrument, lovingly restored by Chris Maene of Ruselede, Belgium, is almost impossible to describe. It shares something of the clavichord's finesse but with a considerably enlarged dynamic spectrum; there are qualities reminiscent of a hammer dulcimer or cimbalom, though more delicate than either; and its incandescent, silvery tone recalls the harp-like qualities of some earlier Silbermann pianos. Employing an arsenal of attack and release strategies, Lubimov draws from it a veritable rainbow of colours plus an abundant variety of sounds perfectly suited to the extravagant expressivity of Bach.

At the time of his death in 1788, Bach's influence was as great as any composer in Europe and, then as now, his keyboard music was held in highest esteem.

Lubimov's carefully chosen programme seems tailored to underscore that influence. Listening to the G major Sonata from the first collection of the series 'for Connoisseurs and Amateurs' of 1779, it is easy to understand why the Viennese felt so indebted to him. Its yearningly soulful *Andante* looks forward to late Beethoven, while its outer movements could easily be mistaken for Haydn.

No less portentous are the pathos of the D minor Sonata, the mercurial flights of the six Fantasies and the two vibrant Rondos. Insight into Bach's syntax is provided by four of the étude-like *Solfeggi*, including the famous one in C minor, contained in so many popular anthologies.

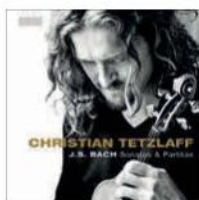
I can think of no other pianist capable of breathing such light and life, such shape and substance into this bold, wildly imaginative music. Lubimov gives us Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach in the white heat of inspiration, forging a new expressive language that will become the musical lingua franca of future generations. Please don't miss this. **Patrick Rucker**

## JS Bach

Solo Violin Sonatas and Partitas, BWV1001-1006

**Christian Tetzlaff** *vn*

Online Ⓢ ② ODE1299-2D (131' • DDD)



Christian Tetzlaff has plenty to tell us about Bach's unaccompanied violin music. Sample

almost anywhere in this beautifully played set and you sense a seasoned musical mind with a will of its own. For example, try the first minute or so of the Fugue from the A minor Sonata, the varieties in bowing, articulation, dynamics; the way sequences rise to the fore, with an almost concerto-like force of expression. This is truly individual playing. Turn then to Alina Ibragimova, her approach lighter than Tetzlaff's, more deftly pointed, focused on the music rather than on a specific way of performing it.

Of course, the archives are especially well stocked with personalised solo Bach, from the young Menuhin to Telmányi, Martzy, Heifetz, Milstein and beyond (speaking only of complete cycles), so while adhering to aspects of modern scholarship, Tetzlaff's individual voice is a welcome throwback. Not that you'll hear various conventions that Tetzlaff has 'increasingly rid himself of' (to nearly quote him), such as uniform vibrato for almost all the notes. If you want evidence of this change of heart, compare the recording under review with Tetzlaff's first set of solo Bach for Virgin (now on Erato), specifically the Sarabande from the D minor Partita, the older version more demonstrably vibrant, the later one relatively vibrato-free and more considerate of sonority and the shaping of chords. In his booklet note he makes the important point that various volume levels need to correspond to musical content. In general they do, except that in Tetzlaff's infinitely flexible new account of the Chaconne there is so much tonal and dynamic expressive incident going on – all of it fascinating to encounter on its own terms – that for the closing moments I miss the sense of an inevitable, majestic denouement. Viktoria Mullova is stronger on architecture, her tempo fairly steady so that any passing gestures (such as *sul ponticello* arpeggios, at 4'33" on her recording) are part of the journey rather than a momentary stopping-off point.

In the C major Sonata's Fugue, at the point where Bach cues an inversion, the effect should surely be something akin to 'My God! What's happening here? Bach is turning this elevated idea on its head!' Here it merely happens, though Tetzlaff's playing is exceptionally adroit, as are the various fast sonata finales. Part of the effect might be due to the fact that the arpeggiated writing just prior to the inversion is played with a striking degree of rhythmic freedom, more so than on the earlier version. Still, I'll court potential criticism for being 'non-PC' by turning to



Christian Tetzlaff brings an individual voice to Bach's Solo Violin Sonatas and Partitas on Ondine

Heifetz in the same passage, where you really do feel the shock of the new. In general I think that with Tetzlaff in 2016 (when these superbly engineered recordings were made) the Partitas come off better than the Sonatas, though everything spells the skill of a master violinist on a roll. I'd recommend the set to pit against other versions that you might already own, if only to question previous convictions, always a good thing to do. **Rob Cowan**

*Selected comparisons:*

Heifetz (11/94) (RCA) 09026 61748-2

Tetzlaff (4/95) (ERAT) 522034-2

Mullova (5/09) (ONYX) ONYX4040

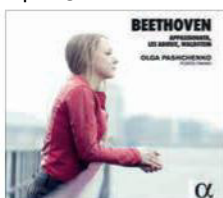
Ibragimova (11/09) (HYPE) CDA67691/2

## Beethoven

Piano Sonatas - No 21, 'Waldstein', Op 53; No 23, 'Appassionata', Op 57; No 26, 'Les adieux', Op 81a

**Olga Pashchenko** *pf*

Alpha © ALPHA365 (70' • DDD)



Fine violins often improve with age. Pianos, on the other hand, as

intricate machines with many moving parts, inevitably deteriorate. So goes the rationale for using a modern replica, rather than an actual antique piano, for recordings. Olga Pashchenko, however, has chosen an 1824 Graf piano, now in the collections of the Beethoven Haus in Bonn, for her traversal of three of the most beloved Beethoven sonatas. A Moscow native, Pashchenko is a graduate of both the Tchaikovsky and Amsterdam conservatories who counts Alexei Lubimov and Richard Egarr among her teachers. She's a musician of immense skill with a strong point of view. Her choice of this beautiful Graf for her superbly recorded new Alpha disc seems fully justified.

From the outset it is obvious that Pashchenko is the master of the Viennese piano, with its drastically scaled-down movements compared to those required for modern instruments, and the alternative expressive strategies it demands. The fleet opening of the *Waldstein* is impressive in its crystalline clarity, all the more admirable as the opening quaver accompaniment figure accelerates to perfectly articulate semiquavers. Her engagement of the

*una corda* mechanism is always seamless and effective. The various textures and levels of sonority in the Rondo are brilliantly delineated, with the infamous octave glissandos of the coda delivered in a genuinely whispered *pianissimo* as Beethoven indicated.

Both the *Appassionata* and *Les adieux* are equally remarkable in their individual ways. I'll confess a partiality for Op 81a, due to Pashchenko's deft execution of the articulation and phrasing in the first and last movements, so difficult to achieve on the modern piano, and the vivid character she brings to the *Andante*.

If there is an aspect of Pashchenko's performances that gives pause for thought, it is that her unruffled poise occasionally fails to convey the intense drama which so often characterises Beethoven. That said, in an age of overheated Beethoven performance, Pashchenko's cool, calm and collected readings can be refreshing. In the arena of 'HIP' Beethoven, already crowded with names like Badura-Skoda, Brautigam, Lubimov and Bilson, her earnest, distinctive voice is a welcome one. **Patrick Rucker**

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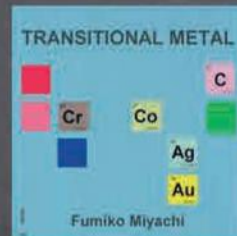
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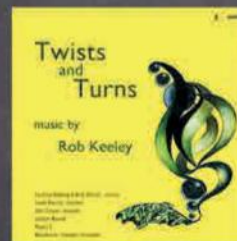
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## Beethoven

Variations on a Waltz by Anton Diabelli, Op 120

Filippo Gorini *pf*

Alpha Ⓢ ALPHA296 (57' • DDD)



It is easy to hear why Filippo Gorini should have won the 2015 Telekom

Beethoven Competition at the age of 20, and why Alfred Brendel should have taken him under his wing. Everything in his recording of the *Diabelli* Variations shows musical awareness and technical aplomb at a high level of fusion, and his own booklet essay confirms his grasp of the overall architecture – a journey from the mundane to the celestial in four arcs, as he puts it – as well as immediate character.

Never is there a whiff of tastelessness, over-statement or superficiality in Gorini's playing. The theme itself has a Brendelesque brusqueness in the way it dusts the grace notes and dismisses the quavers, and everything thereafter is shapely and intelligent.

What's not to admire? Well, it would be unrealistic to expect the young Italian to have as much command of colour, voicing and phrase-sculpting as the greats who have recorded the work; which in turn means that he cannot yet push Beethovenian wit, mystery or fury to comparable extremes. Beyond the musical in Beethoven there is the revelatory, and some of Gorini's playing does sound a little too matter-of-fact for such descriptors. Given his overall conception it's perfectly in order for him to keep the first 'arc' on the restrained side. But by the time we reach the rolling triplets of Variation 7 – here controlled to a fault – it starts to dawn that he will never fully go to the demonic or the other-worldly. The silences of the *Vivace* Var 13 are genial rather than divinely bonkers, and Var 19 is a comfortable *allegro* rather than a wild *presto*; the Mozart paraphrase of Var 22 is spelt out accurately but without much charm, and so on.

Better this than wilful contortion, of course, but excellent though this recording is for a 22-year-old – or by any standards, in fact – it does not have the sheer eloquence or authority of a Kovacevich (in 1968), an Anderszewski or a Levit. Recording quality is good, but not outstanding in the way that Sony's is for Levit. **David Fanning**

*Selected comparisons:*

Kovacevich (1/69<sup>th</sup>) (DECC) 478 6452DC6

Anderszewski (8/01) (VIRG/ERAT) 545468-2

Levit (11/15) (SONY) 88875 06096-2 or 88875 14015-2

## Chopin

Nocturnes – selection

Fazil Say *pf*

Warner Classics Ⓢ 9029 58218-1 (69' • DDD)



Despite their unmistakable indebtedness to John Field, Chopin's

Nocturnes remain unique in the literature. As a group, they are without parallel in the works of Mendelssohn, Schumann or Liszt, and even today are considered indispensable for the development of touch in piano-playing. Among the multitude of recordings of these beloved pieces is a new Warner disc by the Turkish pianist Fazil Say. For what is apparently his first commercial recording of Chopin, Say presents 15 of the canonic 21 Nocturnes in startlingly unconventional readings that raise more questions than they answer.

Most apparent is Say's failure to grasp Chopin's rhetoric, in both the composer's own phrase shapes and those devices borrowed from *bel canto* opera. In the B major Nocturne (Op 32 No 1), for instance, Say ignores the pauses that punctuate phrase groups (0'19", 0'54", etc), thus removing their critical air of ambivalence. The dramatic impact of Chopin's defiant recitative, the Nocturne's final gesture, is neutered by replacing the prevalent *forte* dynamic with a decrescendo to a meek *piano*. The pace of the G minor Nocturne (Op 37 No 1) is unaccountably sped up for the middle chordal section (2'20"), transforming its chorale-like reverence into a march. Rhythmic spine and melodic details in the C minor Nocturne (Op 48 No 1) seem so uncertain and swamped with pedal that Chopin's heroic eloquence assumes the bathos of a torch song.

Exquisite *floratura* passages, characteristic of many of the Nocturnes, often seem more sped through than savoured. And on occasion rubato, rather than emerging organically from the musical affect, feels as though it were applied as an afterthought. The overall impression is of works more summarised than fully inhabited, curiously devoid of variety, dimension and poetry.

**Patrick Rucker**

## Chopin

Piano Sonata No 3, Op 58. Berceuse, Op 57.

Contredanse, B17. Preludes, Op 28

Kotaro Fukuma *pf*

Ars Produktion Ⓢ ARS38 237 (76' • DDD/DSD)



In the main, Kotaro Fukuma's Chopin Preludes abound in brute force yet

lack poetry. He lays on No 2's left-hand dissonances to a fault, overpowering the desolate right-hand melody, and makes heavy weather out of No 3's supple runs. No 5 is just plain loud, with little awareness of the music's cross-rhythmic interplay. Virtuoso preludes such as Nos 8, 12, 22 and 24 become texturally muddy in their loudest moments, although Fukuma brings plenty of bravura and imagination to No 16. By contrast, the lyrical preludes never quite sing out to their fullest potential and seem relatively held back.

Fukuma's Berceuse passes three of the 'four Cs', meaning that it's clear, clean and conscientious. But not the fourth C, caressing, on account of the pianist's square phrasing. Following an inconsequential filler in the form of the G major Contradanse, Fukuma briskly plunges into the B minor Sonata, confidently devouring the pianistic patterns and leaving much of the contrapuntal logic undefined. The Scherzo's outer sections suggest pellets rather than butterflies, although Fukuma shapes the Trio's conversational lines with sensitivity. The *Largo* is steady and straight in Fukuma's hands, yet one suspects that he's keeping his expressive impulses in check; shouldn't the central episode's triplets sing out more freely? By contrast, the finale's soaring long lines and inherent dramatic build go out of the window due to Fukuma's choppy, sectionalised phrasing and gauche accents (the main theme, for example). In light of Fukuma's superb Takemitsu and Schumann discs for Naxos and his equally commendable Chopin Ballades for Denon, this release disappoints.

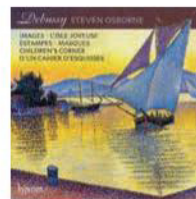
**Jed Distler**

## Debussy

Children's Corner. ... d'un cahier d'esquisses. Estampes. Images, Books 1 & 2. L'isle joyeuse. Masques

Steven Osborne *pf*

Hyperion Ⓢ CDA68161 (73' • DDD)



French music is indispensable to any pianist's training. Nearly all

professionals maintain, at the very least, a few 'speciality' pieces in their active repertoires, and appropriately so. Since the 16th century, the French have contributed decisively to the history of keyboard music – as composers, performers and, no less significantly, instrument makers (think Blanchet, Érard, Cavaillé-Coll). Yet at any given moment, pianists born outside France who are convincingly identified with this very specific repertoire are relatively few. Steven Osborne, from the outset of his career, has been among them.

The latest demonstration of Osborne's way with the French is this splendid new Hyperion release, presenting a bouquet of mature Debussy works. A viscerally exciting *Masques* combines with a subtly understated ... *d'un cahier d'esquisses* to create an overture to *L'isle joyeuse*, in a performance that is both bracingly original and scrupulously adherent to Debussy's score. Protean, fleet, sparse of pedal and drawing on a seemingly infinite arsenal of touch and dynamics, it conjures an isle where irresistible pleasures border on delirium.

The classical restraint and chaste proportions of the two books of *Images* come as an almost startling contrast. Whether in the gentle chimes and gongs of 'Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut' or the spinning kinetic exuberance of 'Mouvement', the darting about of 'Poissons d'or' observed by a scientific eye or the oracular reverence of 'Hommage à Rameau', each piece is strikingly apt and fairly bursts with evocative detail. Osborne shapes the six *Images*, composed over several years, into a cohesive entity that satisfies both emotionally and intellectually.

No less remarkable are the three *Estampes*. At the outset of their centrepiece, 'La soirée dans Grenade', an ancient muezzin's call to prayer is heard before disparate rhythmic and harmonic elements coalesce into the throbbing habanera. It is typical of the ease and clarity with which Osborne teases musical allusion from Debussy's richly layered textures. Even the forthright simplicity of *Children's Corner* cannot disguise its vivid imagery. An exquisitely magical atmosphere is created by 'Snow is Dancing', while in 'Golliwogg's Cakewalk' we counter some real high steppin' when the white folks aren't around.

Osborne traverses this well-known repertoire with obvious relish, relying on immense musical and technical resources to reveal fresh, unexpected perspectives on music we all thought we knew. Intimacies of disarming candour are whispered into

the ear by conjuring dozens of *pianissimos* from the instrument that leave you marvelling at their quality and variety, and admiring the Hyperion engineers who captured them so adroitly. This is music-making of great subtlety and finesse which neither lovers of Debussy and French music nor those who value piano-playing on the highest artistic level will want to miss. **Patrick Rucker**

## Nietzsche

Heldenklage. Ungarischer Marsch. Édes titok. So lacht doch mal. Da geht ein Bach. In Mondschein auf der Puszta. Ermanarich. Unserer Altvordern eingedenk. Das zerbrochene Ringlein. Albumblatt. Das Fragment an sich. Hymnus an die Freundschaft

**Jeroen van Veen** *pf*  
Brilliant (B) 95492 (67' • DDD)



Incompetence, amateurism, banality and ineptitude figure largely in previous

*Gramophone* assessments of Nietzsche's compositional efforts. My guess is that they would be awarded a B if submitted in a folder of GCSE coursework. Most of these broken-backed album leaves do indeed date from his teenage years, when Nietzsche could evidently make his way around Beethoven's sonatas and Schumann's poetic cycles, but his own efforts in imitation emerge as curiously flat and monotonous in effect. Without the titles to hand, you would be hard-pressed to know whether you were listening to moonlight or marching Hungarians, flowing streams or heroic laments.

Unguarded and unpretentious is the generously worded spin of the booklet note writer, who makes little attempt to disguise such technical shortcomings. More problematically, neither does Jeroen van Veen, who is a renowned exponent of minimalist composers. A maximalist approach is what's needed if the awkward midstream changes of direction in a piece such as *Da geht ein Bach* are to gather any coherent sense of momentum. Its original form as a song makes better sense, as you'd expect, in the hands of Fischer-Dieskau and Aribert Reimann (Philips, 3/96).

Later in life, Nietzsche hit upon something with a murky, descending scale motif which subsequently turns up in a sinister corner of *Verklärte Nacht*. Why the philosopher thought it suitable to open a *Hymn to Friendship* is anyone's guess. This is the longest work on the disc, written out in seven sections of increasingly sub-

Wagnerian (I mean, Nibelheim-level) effusion. Van Veen does his best for it, with generous pedalling and a well-exercised left elbow. **Peter Quanttrill**

## Rachmaninov

Preludes - Op 3 No 2; Op 23; Op 32

**Moura Lympany** *pf*

Decca Eloquence (B) 482 6266 (77' • ADD)

Recorded 1941-42



Here is the first recording ever made of all Rachmaninov's Preludes. Recorded for

Decca between May 1941 and August 1942, it has not been available since it was first issued complete in August 1943, just five months after the composer's death. Nearly 10 years later, Dame Moura recorded the entire cycle again for the new LP format. Over 40 years after that, in April 1993, she recorded all 24 again, this time for an Erato CD. Lympany's is a unique achievement.

Most collectors will have the 1951 Decca or 1993 Erato in their collection. So is her first attempt worth having? Absolutely. Is it significantly different? No. All three have their pros and cons. Overall, I would place it a close second to the 1951 recording. The 78s have been sensitively remastered by Andrew Hallifax, who has rightly sought to preserve the gorgeous, cushioned tone (Lympany was a Matthay pupil) at the expense of some surface swish. From the first notes of the famous Prelude in C sharp minor to the final Prelude of Op 32, you feel in safe hands, knowing that nothing will be exaggerated or sentimentalised, agogics and dynamics faithfully translated, in performances that take no account of the inhibiting power of the red light. There are a number of slips along the way (an unfortunate one in the antepenultimate bar of the B minor Prelude) and the final C natural of Op 32 No 7 is inaudible. I miss the tenor line in the A flat Prelude (Op 23 No 8) – it is also underplayed in the 1951 performance – and some of the pieces sound less in the fingers than others. But these are minor reservations. There are simply so many glories here: the popular G minor Prelude bears comparison with any, while the lovely G flat major and G major are also the best of Lympany's three versions. One is left wondering why such a recording has taken so long to come back into circulation.

**Jeremy Nicholas**

*Selected comparisons:*

*Lympany* (7/51<sup>R</sup>) (DECCA) 475 6368DC2

*Lympany* (2/94<sup>R</sup>, 11/05) (APEX) 2564 62036-2

## D Scarlatti

Keyboard Sonatas - Kk24; Kk58; Kk63; Kk64; Kk82; Kk146; Kk206; Kk377; Kk426; Kk428; Kk429; Kk474; Kk481; Kk491; Kk492; Kk513; Kk547

Angela Hewitt *pf*

Hyperion © CDA68184 (79' • DDD)



For her second Scarlatti release, Angela Hewitt partitions 17 sonatas

into five distinctly contrasted but well-integrated sub-groups, although an overall game plan seems to govern the recital as a whole; it begins majestically and concludes in quiet desolation.

The opening D major Sonata, Kk491, makes an almost orchestral impact, not through loudness but on account of Hewitt's variegated articulations and voicings. It leads into the familiar D major, Kk492, which stands out for vividly characterised details, such as unusually heightened scales. Hewitt's well-oiled trills and subtle timing make the G major Kk146 sound faster than it actually is, while the A major Kk24's repeated-note phrases and rapid scales might be described as contained turbulence.

Hewitt's sensitive voice-leading and harmonic pointing throughout the E major, Kk206, justifies her full observation of the repeats (it lasts nine and a half minutes), yet the shorter A major Sonatas, Kk428 and Kk429, are no less meticulously considered. The G major 'Capriccio' and D minor 'Gavota' embody like-minded swagger in Hewitt's hands. In her typically insightful booklet notes, Hewitt rightly claims that the austere G minor Kk426's pauses are as expressive as its notes, as the pianist's performance bears out. That said, Naxos's Gerda Struhal obtains more lilt and animation through her occasional staccato articulation of the bass line.

Also notice Hewitt's scrupulously matched trills in the E flat, Kk474, the fluid dignity she brings to the ricercare-like C minor, Kk458, and her awesomely controlled diminuendos in the F major Kk382's theme statements. And in contrast to Alexis Weissenberg's courtly grace, the darker deliberation of Hewitt's F minor, Kk481, truly reveals the music's inward cry. In short, this release attests to Hewitt's deep affinity for Scarlatti, her exemplary musicianship and her gifts as a programme-builder.

Jed Distler

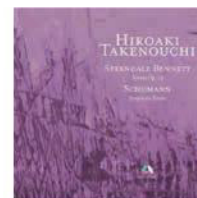
## Schumann · Sterndale Bennett

Schumann *Études symphoniques*, Op 13

Sterndale Bennett Piano Sonata

Hiroaki Takenouchi *pf*

Artalinna © ATL-A018 (62' • DDD)



The long-neglected British composer William Sterndale Bennett moved in the

highest musical circles, being a close friend of both Mendelssohn and Schumann.

There's an aptness to the programming of this disc, Bennett's sonata having been dedicated to Mendelssohn on the occasion of his wedding in 1837, while Schumann's *Études symphoniques* were in turn dedicated to Bennett. And how good it is to hear this sonata – which I hadn't previously encountered – a big, bold work, contemporary with those of Schumann and an interesting gap-filler in the period directly after Beethoven and Schubert.

Bennett sticks to the conventional four movements and, if you don't exactly come away whistling the tunes, it scores high on drama and there's plenty of contrast within it. Hiroaki Takenouchi could perhaps have given the first movement

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more of an overall sweep and had a slightly more fearless approach in the Scherzo second movement (less to do with sheer speed and more about keeping the accompaniment at a lower dynamic level) but he shapes the Mendelssohnian Trio elegantly and the slow movement is nicely songful. Bennett's drivingly virtuosos finale is a real test of an artist's stamina and Takenouchi gives it his all, finding good contrast in the occasional moments of introspection.

Takenouchi plays the earliest published version of Schumann's *Études symphoniques*, which is not helped by its somewhat meandering final étude – Schumann was surely right to rethink this. But here the competition on disc is intense. In an effort to make the piece his own, Takenouchi seems to try too hard. Rather than opening with a majestic sweep, he picks at particular details, dulling the sense of movement; and the agogic pauses of Étude 1 sound warning bells for what is to come. There's also a sense that Takenouchi is at times struggling with the physical aspects of this piece – and numbers such as the Études 3, 4 and 10 don't really take off. Matters improve slightly in Étude 8, which avoids becoming too percussive, while I was heartened that he didn't take the final number too slowly. But this doesn't change a thing in terms of the Schumann discography. I'll be sticking to Hamelin, Anda (live at the 1955 Edinburgh Festival) and the extraordinary Alexander Romanovsky. **Harriet Smith**

*Études symphoniques – selected comparisons:*

Hamelin (5/01) (HYPE) CDA67166

Anda (2/04) (BBCL) BBCL4135-2

Romanovsky (DECC) 476 6208

## Telemann

Fantasias, TWV40:26-37

**Robert Smith** *va da gamba*

Resonus Ⓢ RES10195 (79' • DDD)



As if playing such a ravishing instrument were not enough, exponents of the viola da gamba must be feeling especially blessed at the moment. The reason? Well, in 2015 it was announced that the 12 solo fantasias Telemann is known to have published in 1735, but of which no copy seemed to have survived, had been rediscovered in the Lower Saxony State Archive. Gamba folk surely cannot have believed their luck, especially when the music itself turned out to have all the qualities one expects

of Telemann, which is to say attractiveness, elegance, variety, skilful construction and ideal fitness to its instrument, making these fantasias perfect partners to his similar sets for solo flute and violin.

The first modern edition appeared last year, as did the first recording, by Thomas Fritzsch (Coviello, 6/16). Charlotte Gardner enjoyed Fritzsch's 'natural, joy-filled' playing but was rightly unsettled by the grunts and squeaks of an intrusively close recording. There is no such irritation with this new version by the British gambist Robert Smith, which unfolds in a kindly acoustic in which clarity and bloom are allowed just the right balance. The playing, too, is a treat, sent into the world via a sound that is mellow and silvery but never thin or wispy. Few of the movements are longer than three minutes but Smith navigates Telemann's fleeting moods with assurance and focus – whether in the concentrated harmonies of a *grave* slow movement or in the sprightly dancelike release of an *allegro* finale – and finds tellingly timed rhetorical space between phrases. Double-stoppings are here used relatively sparingly for solo viol music but are executed with smoothness and clarity.

There will be more recordings to come – Richard Boothby and Paolo Pandolfo are among those who have been on the case already – but these works demand to be heard now, and Smith's performances serve them perfectly well. **Lindsay Kemp**

## 'Aferossis'

'20th and 21st Century Works for Solo Cello'

**B Hummel** Fantasia II, 'In memoriam Pablo Casals' **Kurtág** Pálinszky János: Gérard de Neval.

In memoriam György Aczel **Ligeti** Solo Cello

Sonata **Markoulaki** Cretan Suite **Penderecki**

Per Slava **Rózsa** Toccata capricciosa

**Sallinen** Elegie Sebastian Knight'ille

**Walton** Passacaglia

**Michael Heupel** VC

Ars Produktion Ⓢ ARS38 231 (75' • DDD/DSD)



The Greek word 'aferossis' is a portmanteau of 'dedication' and 'sacred'. On this impressive recording, the Athens-born cellist Michael Heupel explores both meanings in a range of 20th- and 21st-century works for solo cello where personal attribution and memorialisation lie at the music's very core.

With its brooding lower register and lyrical high range, the cello lends itself particularly well to epigrammatic works of unsettling intensity, such as György Kurtág's characteristically concise brace of miniatures, *In memoriam György Aczel* and *Pálinszky János: Gérard de Neval*, or Krzysztof Penderecki's *Per Slava*. Heupel's interpretation of the latter is especially convincing, laying bare the music's fissured surfaces while maintaining its overall formal shape.

Heupel explores a wider timbral palette in Bertold Hummel's *Fantasia II, 'in memoriam Pablo Casals'*, which makes judicious use of harmonics and muted sounds. He also manages to capture the terse, dialogic interplay underpinning both movements of György Ligeti's Solo Cello Sonata – reserved in the first, erupting into life in the second – although the latter's capriccio is perhaps not as carefully managed as Matt Haimovitz's excellent performance on 'Orbit: Music for Solo Cello' (Pentatone).

Lighter contrasts are occasionally heard here, such as in Miklós Rózsa's dancelike *Toccata capricciosa* and in the third and fourth movements of Efi Markoulaki's *Cretan Suite*, especially composed for Heupel in 2016. However, the most memorable moments remain profoundly introspective, as typified in Aulis Sallinen's unsettling *Elegie Sebastian Knight'ille* and Walton's late Passacaglia for solo cello, both of which lend themselves to the dark, resonant hues of Heupel's low range and soaring treble lines. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

## 'Live at the Mariinsky'

**Haydn** Piano Sonata, HobXVI:32 **Chopin** Piano Sonata No 2, Op 35 **Liszt** Consolation, S172 No 3. Hungarian Rhapsody, S244 No 2 **Rachmaninov** Variations on a Theme of Corelli, Op 42

**George Li** *pf*

Warner Classics Ⓢ 9029 58129-4 (69' • DDD)

Recorded live, October 4, 2016



A photograph of the 2015 International Tchaikovsky Competition silver medallist on the disc cover shows a young man looking into the camera with an open, winning smile. It makes a change from the normal haughty or glum poses that normally greet the paying customer. And it's a smile that might well find itself transferred to that customer's face when they hear the Haydn sonata which



A mellow and silvery sound: Robert Smith brings Telemann's long-lost solo fantasias for viola da gamba to life

begins George Li's recital at the Mariinsky Concert Hall, St Petersburg, in October 2016. It's the kind of dextrous, bubbling, life-affirming performance that cannot help but lift the spirits and make one eager to hear what follows.

The opening of the first movement of the 'Funeral March' Sonata does not quite match expectations. Neither the ambiguous pulse of the first subject nor the leading voice is sufficiently defined but the performance blossoms and flourishes as it continues (he takes the repeat from the *doppio movimento* bar, not *da capo*); the Scherzo is crisp and punchy; the eponymous third movement is unusually doleful and heartfelt, with the Trio providing a genuine sense of consolation; and the finale is superbly coloured and phrased.

Rachmaninov's *Variations on a Theme of Corelli* (more correctly *Variations on 'La folia'*) provides further evidence of a major talent to whom it is simply a pleasure to listen (the occasional pedal thump notwithstanding). Liszt's *Consolation* No 3 reminded me of Tamás Vásáry's account from 1958

while the ubiquitous *Hungarian Rhapsody* No 2 concludes proceedings – ubiquitous, that is, apart from Rachmaninov's rarely heard and stylistically anachronistic cadenza (last encountered in these pages as recently as July in the composer's own recording). This is said to be a live concert. From beginning to end there is little evidence of such. It would have been nice to have included the thunderous applause that must have greeted the conclusion of this impressive recital. **Jeremy Nicholas**

### 'The Operatic Pianist, Vol 2'

**Bellini** *Il pirata* – Col sorriso d'innocenza (transcr Wright) **Jaëll** *Réminiscences de Norma* **Leschetizky** *Andante finale de Lucia di Lammermoor*, Op 13 **Liszt** *Fantasy on Themes from Rienzi*, S439 **Meyerbeer** *Cavatine de Robert le diable* (transcr Kullak) **Saint-Saëns** *Concert Paraphrase on La mort de Thaïs* **Thalberg** *Fantaisie sur Mosè in Egitto*, Op 33 **Wagner** *Lohengrin's Admonition* (transcr Liszt, S446 No 3) **Wright** *Paraphrase on Verdi's 'Miserere' (Il trovatore)*  
**Andrew Wright** pf  
Divine Art © DDA25153 (68' • DDD)



With origins dating back to the 18th century, the opera fantasy reached its artistic peak during the 19th in the works of Liszt and Thalberg. In the second half of the century, however, the virtuoso fantasy began to lose ground to waltz paraphrases and opera-based piano music directed towards the lucrative amateur market. By the end of the First World War opera fantasies had decisively fallen from fashion. It wasn't until the 1960s and '70s, thanks largely to the efforts of pianists such as Raymond Lewenthal and Earl Wild, that interest in this large and significant corner of the repertoire was rekindled.

Andrew Wright has made a special study of the opera fantasy both as a performer and composer, and now follows up his 2014 release 'The Operatic Pianist' with a second volume. Wright's own contributions to the programme include a more or less straightforward transcription of Imogene's second act aria from Bellini's *Il pirata* and a rather more ambitious

paraphrase on the Miserere from Verdi's *Il trovatore*. Not as succinct as Liszt's treatment of the Miserere, Wright encumbers the proceedings with a curiously conspicuous extended trill and, in the manner of Liszt's *Niobe Fantasy*, a hailstorm of minor thirds.

In terms of musical and pianistic invention, Alfred Jaëll's *Réminiscences de Norma* falls short of the earlier fantasies of both Thalberg and Liszt inspired by the same opera. Leschetizky pads the sextet from *Lucia* with gratuitous arpeggios, creating a longer if less compelling musical experience. Of greater interest are Thalberg's *Moses Fantasy*, one of the pieces he played during the famous Paris 'duel' with Liszt at the Princess Belgiojoso's, and Saint-Saëns's treatment of Massenet's *Thaïs*, titled *La mort de Thaïs*. Yet in both, one wishes for a greater sense of drama and sweep, the go-for-broke sort of playing this repertory depends on.

Wright admirably avoids over-playing and his pedalling is always judicious. On the other hand, his dynamic range seems constrained and, at certain critical moments, he is prone to lose the musical line, that sleight-of-hand with which pianists strive to create the illusion of legato on an instrument essentially incapable of it. **Patrick Rucker**

## 'Piano Music of Palestinian Composers'

**Anastas Small** Étude for the Peace

**Arnita** Introduction and Oriental Dance No 1

**Dueri** Memories of Bethlehem **Gibran** from silence to silence **Lama** Eight Variations on a Palestinian Theme **Nasser** Sonata No 5

**Odeh-Tamimi** A Remembrance of the Forgotten

**Touma** Arabic Suite. *Taqsim*

**Fadi Deeb** *pf*

Gideon Boss © GB009 (74' • DDD)



Palestinian classical composition remains a largely unknown quantity, even though

numerous practitioners were based at least partially in the West. The present disc surveys seven decades of piano music, in the process confirming stylistic diversity as by no means a European preserve.

Salvador Arnita harnesses rhetoric and exuberance in his piece (1942), its lively folk inflection in pointed contrast to the stark chordal repetitions and fragmented non-piano sounds of Samir Odeh-Tamimi's elegy (2006). Integration of form with expression is evident throughout Amin Nasser's Fifth Sonata (2002), an ambivalent

*Allegro* finding its natural corollary in the limpid eddying of its *Largo*, then the anxious figuration of its *Moderato*. Mounir Anastas contributes an étude (2001) of mounting disjunction, and Habib Hassan Touma stands audibly in the lineage of Bartók and Prokofiev in his *Arabic Suite* (1960), its finale evincing a more personal manner pursued with the textural diversity of *Taqsim* (1966). Patrick Lama's set of variations (1983) is arguably the highlight here in its technical finesse allied to a pianism of telling subtlety and unaffected poise, whereas Wisam Gibran's set of four pieces (2009) is the most arresting in its stratified layers of sound which merge into a cohesive and cumulative sequence as if by force of will. Nasri Fernando Dueri's atmospheric miniature (1952) makes for an evocative ending.

All credit to Fedi Deeb for having created so fascinating and astutely balanced a programme and for performing it with demonstrable commitment. Comprehensive booklet notes and numerous illustrations add further to the excellence of an enterprise well worth investigating. **Richard Whitehouse**

## 'Rarities of Piano Music 2016'

**Alexandrov** Vision, Op 21 No 2<sup>a</sup> **Brahms**

Hungarian Dance No 11<sup>b</sup> **Britten** Holiday Diary, Op 5<sup>c</sup> - No 2, Sailing; No 3, Fun-Fair

**R Casadesu** Prélude, Op 5 No 2<sup>a</sup> **Chaminade**

Les sylvains, Op 60<sup>d</sup> **Coke** Prelude, Op 33 No 7<sup>e</sup>

**Fauré** Barcarolle No 8, Op 96<sup>a</sup> **Kirchner**

Nachtbilder, Op 25<sup>f</sup> - No 2; No 6

**Liszt** Hymne de la nuit, S173a/1<sup>g</sup>

**Medtner** Canzona serenata, Op 38 No 6<sup>g</sup>

**Moniuszko/Friedman** Printemps, Op 28 No 1<sup>h</sup>

**Mozart/Busoni** Die Zauberflöte - Overture<sup>i</sup>

**Paderewski** Nocturne, Op 16 No 4<sup>h</sup>

**Rachmaninov/Wild** Midsummer Nights,

Op 14 No 5<sup>i</sup>. O, cease thy singing, Op 4 No 4<sup>i</sup>

**Reger** Träume am Kamin, Op 143 No 12<sup>k</sup>

**Reubke** Scherzo<sup>a</sup> **Rodgers/Hough** My Favourite

Things<sup>e</sup> **D Scarlatti/Tausig** Pastorale<sup>k</sup>

**Wagner/Brassin** Die Walküre - Magic

Fire Music<sup>a</sup>

<sup>d</sup>Johann Blanchard, <sup>e</sup>Simon Callaghan,

<sup>g</sup>Zlata Chochieva, <sup>a</sup>Severin von Eckardstein,

<sup>h</sup>Martin Jones, <sup>k</sup>Joseph Moog, <sup>f</sup>Florian Noack,

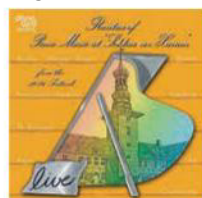
<sup>h</sup>Hubert Rutkowski, <sup>c</sup>Artem Yasynskyy,

<sup>i</sup>Duo Grau/Schumacher, <sup>b</sup>Duo Mercier/Katsaris *pf*

Danacord © DACOCD789 (79' • DDD)

Recorded live at Schloss vor Husum,

August 19-27, 2016



Danacord's annual selection of highlights from the previous year's

Husum Festival represents, on this occasion, something of a milestone. The 2016 Festival was the 30th. Its attraction is international. Devotees travel from Asia and America to this small north German town. Every seat for the week-long series of recitals is sold out months in advance yet, strangely, no one else has sought to replicate its obvious appeal.

Here, where the standard, over-played works of the piano are *verboten*, connoisseurs and keyboard virgins alike mingle to hear recitals from famous names and unknowns. This selection of (necessarily) short works culled from (mainly) full-length recitals, accompanied by Peter Grove's customarily informative booklet, is among the best of the long-running Danacord/Husum series, opening with Johann Blanchard, one of Husum's 'Young Explorers', playing Chaminade's sparkling *Les sylvains* ('The Fauns').

Severin von Eckardstein is granted four slots. You can hear why. After Fauré, Robert Casadesu and Anatoly Alexandrov, he gives us Reubke's Scherzo in D minor, a virtuoso work and a real discovery, written shortly before the two sonatas (one each for piano and organ) for which he is best known. Then comes Louis Brassin's realisation of the Magic Fire Music from *Die Walküre*, as formidable as it is ingenious, and a favourite of Josef Hofmann. Von Eckardstein's daring, flamboyant performances are sensational.

So it continues: 22 separate items from 13 different artists (including a brace of piano duos). Lack of space precludes examining each in detail but special mention must be made of Zlata Chochieva's Liszt and Medtner, Artem Yasynskyy in two exuberant movements from *Holiday Diary* (Britten) and Simon Callaghan's sparkling dispatch of Stephen Hough's Godowskian transcription of 'My Favourite Things'. The superb Hamburg Steinway used throughout is beautifully voiced. Pianophiles and repertoire junkies will need no further encouragement. Perhaps others, pianists and concert promoters among them, might investigate and hear what untapped treasures there are out there – if only they would listen.

**Jeremy Nicholas**

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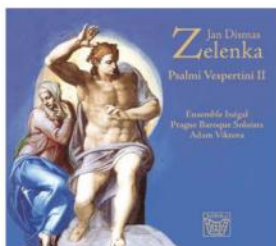


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# Louis Andriessen

The Dutch self-confessed maximalist is a classical composer but with a very unclassical style, says **Andy Hamilton**

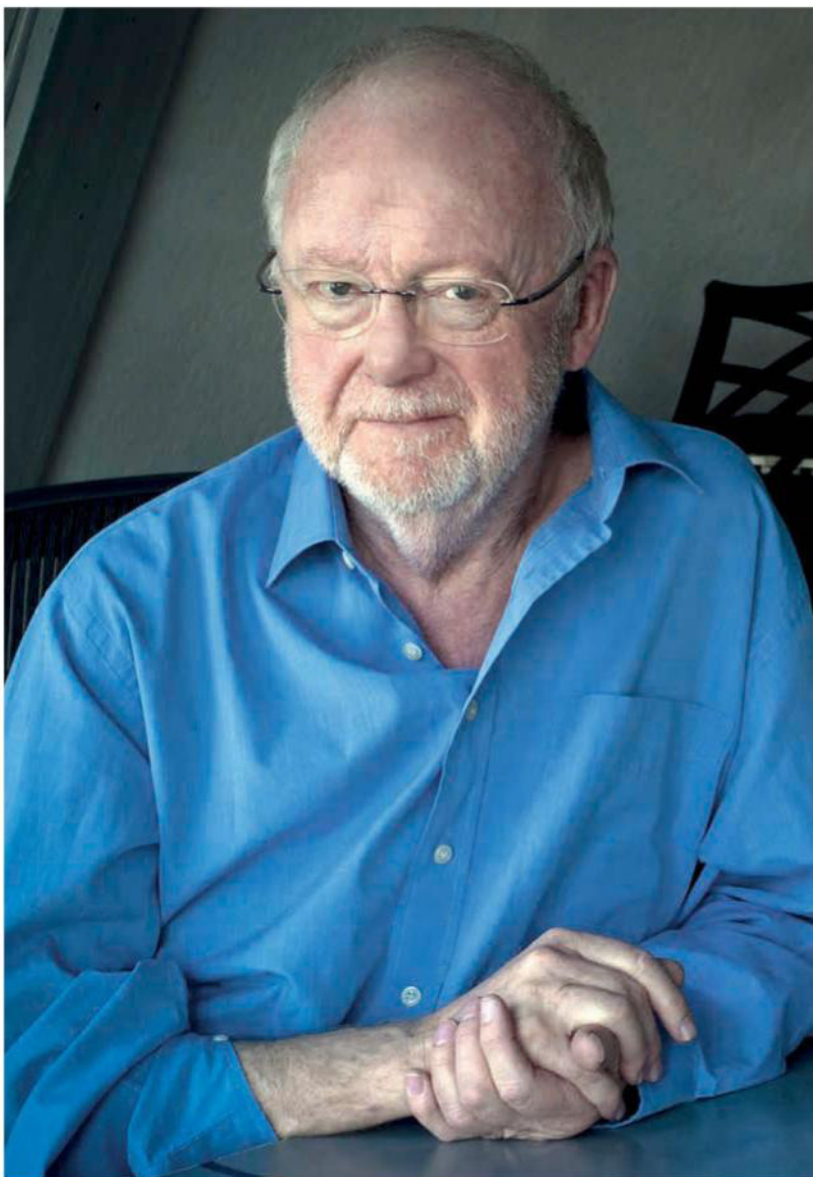
**I** am not a political composer,' the leading Dutch composer Louis Andriessen has said. 'I am just a composer who sometimes writes on political things.' He has also denied links to Marxism. When asked about his music in a 2002 interview, he said: 'Well, it doesn't sound Marxist. There's no such thing as a Marxist chord! But I did think there should be equality of information between the parts. I didn't want some leading and others just supporting.' Maybe the successful composer has mellowed since then, but his music retains its political edge, however he chooses to label it.

Andriessen was born in Utrecht in 1939, son of composer Hendrik Andriessen. He studied composition at The Hague's Royal Conservatory, and then in Milan and Berlin with Italian master Berio. After youthful works informed by neoclassicism and post-war serialism, he developed a more political, theatrical idiom, influenced by jazz, Stravinsky and, later, American minimalism. A love of French music – Poulenc, Satie in particular – came from his father, whom (according to one of his students) he would report as saying, 'Those Germans – they dig very deep, but they never find anything.'

## *Andriessen renounced the orchestra as an oppressive hierarchical structure*

Andriessen was a youthful iconoclast. In 1969, with fellow avant-gardists – including conductor and composer Reinbert de Leeuw and improvising pianist Misha Mengelberg – he disrupted a concert by Bernard Haitink and the Concertgebouw Orchestra with a protest which demanded more contemporary music. This outrage formed a rupture in post-war Dutch musical life. Although it didn't change the programming policy of the Concertgebouw, it paved the way for the contemporary music groups for which the Netherlands became renowned. Andriessen's iconoclasm underlies one of the most notable features of his style, found almost from the outset – his rejection of the classical sustaining line of string instruments, in favour of the rhythmic power of brass, winds, percussion and electric instruments. The composer renounced the orchestra as an oppressive hierarchical structure, setting up Orkest de Volharding and Hoketus – his own ensembles of classical, jazz and pop musicians – to perform compositions of the same name.

Andriessen is, then, a classical composer but with a very unclassical style. Critics described his early compositions as 'minimalist', but Andriessen had a love/hate relationship with



Andriessen's style has become less hard-edged, less hardcore – more accessible

American minimalist pioneers Steve Reich, Terry Riley and Philip Glass and their classic work of the 1960s, acknowledging their influence, but denying that he was following in their footsteps. Arguably, *De volharding* ('Perseverance', 1972) and *Hoketus* (1976) are his only truly minimalist compositions, involving process – slow, gradual changes creating a linear development – and not just repetition.

The compelling interpretation of *Hoketus* found on the Bang on a Can All-Stars album 'Gigantic Dancing Human Machine' (5/03) highlights that this, like much of Andriessen's output from the 1970s and '80s, is loud, muscular, in-your-face music that takes no prisoners. The composer coined the term 'maximalism' to describe its visceral, emotional rawness – a soundscape once described as 'a European heavy metal answer to American minimalism', more rooted in rock than in classical music.

With *De staat* ('The Republic', 1972-76), this vociferous early style is somewhat tamed. Even so, the results – featuring Andriessen's characteristic sonorities of brass, keyboards and bass guitars – may be too stentorian and hard-edged for some tastes. *De staat* remains Andriessen's best-known composition, but this is music to admire rather than to love. It draws



PHOTOGRAPHY: FRANCESCA PATELLA

on Plato's *The Republic*, in which the Greek philosopher advocates the banning of certain musical modes because of their allegedly damaging political and social effects ('If only it were true that musical innovation represented a danger to the State!' Andriessen later expressed, somewhat ruefully).

'Maximalism' continued with the 1980s project *De materie* ('Matter', 1984-88), a genre-defying mix of theatre, narration, singing, instrumental music and philosophy. In its third movement, 'De stijl' ('The Style'), named after the Dutch abstract art movement of the 1920s, Andriessen musically imagines Piet Mondrian's *Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue*, at one point including a honky-tonk interlude as a tribute to the artist's love of boogie-woogie. It has also been suggested that the music's funky chaconne line is indebted to jazz-rock supergroup Weather Report. But although this kaleidoscopic, bombastic maximalism is enjoyable live ('De stijl' was performed at the Total Immersion festival of Andriessen's music at the Barbican, London, in 2016), a little goes a long way.

That Barbican festival made me more aware than ever of the depth of Andriessen's output, which is far more varied than the label 'maximalism' suggests. That's not to say that he's a chameleon, however (it could be argued that he's as

## ANDRIESSEN FACTS

**Born** Utrecht, June 6, 1939; has lived almost all his adult life in Amsterdam

**Studied** With Luciano Berio and others

**Breakthrough work** *De staat*, premiered in 1976; probably his best-known composition

**Prize** Won the 2011 Grawemeyer Award for *La commedia*

stylistically consistent as his role model Stravinsky) – although a slower (though not necessarily more gentle) style was apparent from the 1980s with works such as *De tijd* ('Time', 1980-81), which are philosophical rather than political in inspiration. Indeed, since the 1980s, Andriessen's style has become less hard-edged, less hardcore, and he's written more singable melodies.

That's partly because he's written more operas, of course – albeit for performers who are not conventional opera singers. Sadly, few vocalists are up to the job, but those who are – Cristina Zavalloni, for example, Andriessen's 'Cathy Berberian', who performed the 2016 UK premiere (as well as the world premiere in Amsterdam, 2008) of *La commedia* (2004-08) – can produce thrilling results. A collaboration with independent film director Hal Hartley, and inspired by Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, *La commedia* features jazzy dialogues reminiscent of Stravinsky's *Ebony Concerto* or Bernstein's *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs*, demonstrating Andriessen's lasting affection for the punchy power of brass, winds, percussion and electric guitar.

The composer's move towards greater accessibility has continued, and in recent decades his music has even included strings – although he has insisted that they must never sound like a conventional orchestral string section. In *Mysteriën* (2013) – inspired by the 15th-century Dutch author Thomas à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ*, and Andriessen's first large-scale orchestral work for 50 years – a relatively familiar orchestral timbre is created by a reduced string section, plus three harps (one detuned to produce microtones). The overall effect is haunting and unforgettable – a brooding lamentation on human existence. **G**

## ANDRIESSEN AND THE VOICE

Early and later vocal works all featuring Cristina Zavalloni



### La passione

Cristina Zavalloni mezzo Monica Germino vn  
Boston Modern Orchestra Project / Gil Rose  
BMOP/sound

A showcase for Cristina Zavalloni, the song-cycle *La passione* (2002) sets anguished text by Italian modernist poet Dino Campana.



### Anaïs Nin. De staat

Cristina Zavalloni sop Synergy Vocals; Sound Intermedia;  
London Sinfonietta / David Atherton  
Signum (2/12)

A pairing of the consummate interpretation of *De staat* with the monodrama based on Anaïs Nin's confessional diaries, with Cristina Zavalloni against Kurt Weill cabaret backdrop.



### La commedia

*Sgrs inc* Cristina Zavalloni; De Kickers Children's Choir;  
ASKO|Schönberg / Reinbert de Leeuw  
Nonesuch (A/14)

Phantasmagoric, protean reading of Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, including a DVD of Hal Hartley's film that intercuts with stage action – a summation of the composer's theatrical ethos.

# Vocal



## Edward Seckerson welcomes the Broadway hit *Dear Evan Hansen*:

*'Evan's near-catastrophic journey to self-recognition and acceptance is chronicled in a terrific set of songs'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 86**



## Lindsay Kemp enjoys L'Arpeggiata's improvisatory Handel:

*'For all the new ideas they explore, it is the composer's expressive melodic genius that is at the heart of everything'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 90**

## G Benjamin • Dowland

### G Benjamin Upon Silence<sup>a</sup>

Dowland *Lachrimae, or Seaven Teares*<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Sarah Breton *mez* <sup>b</sup>Karl Nyhlin *lute* **Sit Fast**

Evidence Ⓢ EVCD034 (53' • DDD • T)



French viol consort Sit Fast (named after a piece by Christopher Tye) have shown a

liking for cycles in their two recordings to date – the complete Purcell Fantazias and Bach's *The Art of Fugue* (both on Eloquencia). Now here they are with Dowland's seven incrementally altered versions of the pavan known in its song version as 'Flow my tears', published in 1604 and thus perhaps the earliest of all great instrumental cycles.

What makes it so great is the way Dowland uses the slowest, most substantial and most emotive dance form of his time to explore many subtle degrees of melancholy, a sentiment which Sit Fast choose to mine in markedly slow tempos. They thus differ from the recent *Gramophone* Award-winning recording by Phantasm, which is generally quicker by about a third. Phantasm focus on the expressive power of Dowland's shifting harmonies and keep the music's dance pace in mind, but Sit Fast appear more interested in transparency and the lingering long line, delivered in tones more delicate, silvery and intimate than Phantasm's firmly projected sound. If there is a risk in Sit Fast's drawn-out manner, it is that the cycle can come across as uneventful. The short gaps between tracks don't help, undermining the rhythm of the cycle by not quite allowing enough time for reflection on the pavan just gone and anticipation of the next. But there are beauties here nonetheless.

Whereas Phantasm followed the seven pavans with the 14 other dances from Dowland's original publication, Sit Fast have coupled them with George Benjamin's setting of Yeats's poem 'Upon Silence'. The work is as exquisite as you would

expect from its composer – inward, intimate and brilliantly sensitive to the subtle tensions between motion and stillness. The work was originally composed for Fretwork and recorded by them with Susan Bickley; Sit Fast's reading with Sarah Breton is more delicate and texturally lucid, if less strongly shaped and coloured. **Lindsay Kemp**

*Dowland – selected comparison:*

*Phantasm (8/16) (LINN) CKD527*

*Benjamin – comparative version:*

*Bickley, Fretwork (4/97) (NIMB) NI5505*

## Blow

An Ode on the Death of Mr Henry Purcell.

Begin the Song!. The Nymphs of the Wells.

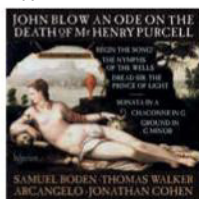
Dread Sir, the Prince of Light. Chaconne a 4

in G. Ground in G minor. Sonata in A

**Samuel Boden, Thomas Walker** *tens*

**Arcangelo / Jonathan Cohen**

Hyperion Ⓢ CDA68149 (77' • DDD • T/T)



This release joins a surprisingly small company entirely devoted to works by

Purcell's teacher and friend John Blow (excepting the opera *Venus and Adonis*), and makes a welcome sight. Along with the relatively well-known *Ode on the Death of Mr Henry Purcell* – a jewel of 17th-century English music – here are handsome rarities in the form of three odes showing that Purcell was not the only composer to make a musical success of this apparently unpromising genre. There are also three charming instrumental chamber pieces.

*Begin the Song!*, for St Cecilia's Day 1684, is a call to sensual, in places raunchy enjoyment of music's powers that shows Blow's imaginative responses to text (I love the way the music smoothly mutates at 'gentlest thoughts, that into language glide, / bring softest words, that into numbers slide'). *The Nymphs of the Wells* marks the eighth birthday of the Stuarts' last hope of a royal succession, William Duke of Gloucester; if it was

intended for the sickly child's own enjoyment, as the dramatised approach and trite verse perhaps hint, Blow himself made few concessions in his own vocal lines, which in his usual way tend to the sophisticatedly meandering and surprising while always seeming to come out right in the end. *Dread Sir, the Prince of Light*, for New Year's Day 1678, is if anything more straightforward, perhaps reflecting a breezier court occasion.

For many, getting to know these pieces will be persuasion enough, but the performances complete the seduction with their expert playing and singing, vigorous but tastefully realised sense of style and – despite being mostly one-to-a-part – firmly shaped contours and effective illustrative touches, such as the strumming theorbo for the Purcell Ode's 'jarring spheres'. The two high tenors, flirting between chest and head voice, are a sweet treat in this last piece, more often the playground of countertenors. With a recording that is wonderfully clear and alive, everything seems to be going right for Jonathan Cohen at present. **Lindsay Kemp**

## G Bush • Horowitz

G Bush archy at the zoo. Cuisine provençale.

Love for such a cherry lip. Mirabile misterium (A great and mighty wonder). Three Songs of Ben Jonson. Yesterday (Nine Songs for Kay to Poems by Charles Causley) **Horowitz** Foie-gras. The Garden of Love. Lady Macbeth. Malicious Madrigal. Romance. Zum 11ten März

**Susanna Fairbairn** *sop* **Matthew Schellhorn** *pf*

Naxos Ⓢ 8 571378 (80' • DDD)



That Geoffrey Bush (1920-98) possessed a very real gift for word-setting is

evident throughout this most welcome selection of his songs, the contents of which span more than four decades. Dating from 1952, the *Three Songs of Ben Jonson* already proclaim a budding mastery of the medium (one imagines Bush's



Wonderfully clear and alive: the tenors Samuel Boden and Thomas Walker are joined by Arcangelo in odes by Purcell's teacher John Blow

childhood mentor, John Ireland, would have been mightily pleased). They're preceded here by *Mirabile misterium* (1985), seven sharply inventive treatments of medieval texts in praise of the Virgin Mary, full of engaging personality and blissful wonder, not least the concluding 'Out of your sleep arise and wake' with its ecstatically pealing bells. Both *Yesterday* (1990, nine settings of poems by the Cornishman Charles Causley) and *archy at the zoo* (1994, to words by the American humorist Don Marquis) likewise stand out for their pithiness, wit, grace and melodic fecundity. Commissioned in 1982 by The Songmakers' Almanac (and premiered that same year by Felicity Palmer and Graham Johnson), 'Cuisine provençale' proves another gem, a wryly observant, five and a half-minute scena, whose text was adapted by the composer himself from Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*.

Joseph Horovitz turned 90 last year, and the six varied and approachable offerings that make up Naxos's 27-minute sequence in fact represent his entire output for voice and piano. Absorbing listening they make, too, whether it be the chilling intensity of the scena 'Lady Macbeth', seductive sense of longing in 'Zum 11ten März' (the date of Hitler's annexation of Austria in 1938 –

Vienna-born Horovitz and his family emigrated to Britain shortly afterwards) or biting satire of 'Foie-gras' (composed in 1974 for The King's Singers to words by Michael Flanders).

Soprano Susanna Fairbairn is in delectably fresh voice throughout, and she forges a splendidly stylish and communicative alliance with her accompanist Matthew Schellhorn. They have been very well recorded, and there are also useful booklet notes by Roderick Swanson and the disc's producer Martin Cotton, but the absence of texts is an irritant. Cordially recommended nonetheless. **Andrew Achenbach**

## David

'Portraits, Vol 4'

Christophe Colomb<sup>a</sup>. La perle du Brésil – Overture<sup>b</sup>. Le jugement dernier<sup>c</sup>. Symphony No 3<sup>b</sup>. Six Motets<sup>d</sup>. Sept Mélodies<sup>e</sup>. Le ramier<sup>e</sup>. Éoline<sup>e</sup>. Cri de charité<sup>e</sup>. Tristesse de l'odalisque<sup>e</sup>. L'Égyptienne<sup>e</sup>. Le jour des morts<sup>e</sup>. Le Rhin allemand<sup>e</sup>. Piano Trio No 1<sup>f</sup>. Le soir<sup>g</sup>. Les brises d'Orient<sup>g</sup> – Fantasia harabi; Prière; Vieux Caire. Doux souvenir<sup>g</sup>. Allegretto agitato<sup>g</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Chantal Santon-Jeffrey sop <sup>a</sup>Julien Behr ten

<sup>a</sup>Josef Wagner bar <sup>a</sup>Jean-Marie Winling spkr

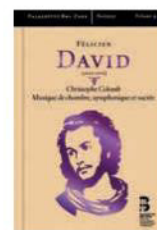
<sup>f</sup>Pascal Monlong vn <sup>f</sup>Pauline Buet vc <sup>g</sup>Jonas

Vitaut, <sup>f</sup>David Violi pf <sup>g</sup>François Saint-Yves org

<sup>e</sup>Duo Contraste (Cyrille Dubois ten Tristan Raës pf) acd <sup>f</sup>Flemish Radio Choir; <sup>b</sup>Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra / <sup>bcd</sup>Hervé Niquet; <sup>a</sup>Les Siècles / François-Xavier Roth

Ediciones Singulares Ⓢ Ⓢ ES1028

(3h 52' • DDD • T/t)



Félicien David's music has edged its way back to the fringes of the repertoire of late, and Palazzetto Bru Zane's marvellous survey

of his output effectively complements recent recordings of his 1844 'ode-symphonie' *Le désert* (Naïve, 6/15), immensely popular in its day, and the operas *Lalla Roukh* (Naxos, 6/14) and *Herculanum* (also Ediciones Singulares, 10/15). Shortly after David's death in 1876, Saint-Saëns noted that his 'manner is highly individual, and disconcerts the critic by its irregularities', an apt description of a composer who can be attractive and perplexing by turns.

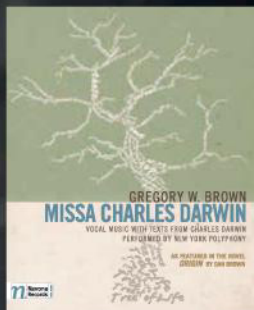
David was a Saint-Simonian, a member of a sect, much frowned upon in official circles, that combined utopian socialist ideals with a quasi-ecclesiastical

AS FEATURED IN THE NOVEL *ORIGIN* BY DAN BROWN

# GREGORY W. BROWN

## MISSA CHARLES DARWIN

VOCAL MUSIC WITH TEXTS FROM CHARLES DARWIN



Around the world, millions of readers eagerly await the impending release of the new thriller *ORIGIN* by Dan Brown, the #1 New York Times bestselling author of *THE DA VINCI CODE*.

Featured in *ORIGIN* is *MISSA CHARLES DARWIN* — created by award-winning composer Gregory W. Brown, who also happens to be the author's brother. The piece explores the intersection of science and religion in this deluxe compact disc.

*"I've always been fascinated by the interplay between science and religion; Missa Charles Darwin is an ingenious fusion of the two, and it immediately captivated me." — Dan Brown, Author of THE DA VINCI CODE*

*MISSA CHARLES DARWIN* was written for Grammy®-nominated New York Polyphony and is structured on the standard liturgical Mass. Brown painstakingly translated DNA sequences and markers into musical phrases set to texts by Charles Darwin. In doing so, Brown simultaneously commemorates the scientist's genius while interrogating the relationship between faith and reason.

All of Gregory's proceeds from this release are being donated to musical education charities including:

- International Society for Music Education
- American Choral Directors Association
- Chorus America



*MISSA CHARLES DARWIN* comes in special edition deluxe packaging. A limited edition including photography hand signed by Gregory and Dan Brown is also available at:

[missacharlesdarwin.com](http://missacharlesdarwin.com)

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organisation dependent upon charismatic leadership cults. Its doctrines loom large over *Christophe Colomb*, first performed in 1847, and, like *Le désert*, an ode-symphonie, an amalgam of spoken narration with vocal, choral and operatic scenes, a form David derived, in part, from Berlioz's *Lélio*. It envisions Columbus as an inspirational leader guiding his followers across the Atlantic to create a new society in a new world. Arias and ensembles alternate with choruses of emotive, almost propagandistic simplicity, some of which re-use hymns written for the Saint-Simonian commune at Ménilmontant, where David lived between 1831 and 1833. The divertissement for the 'sauvages', encountered in the New World in the final scene, seems suspect nowadays, though its exotic style was much admired and imitated in the 19th century.

The extraordinary *Le jugement dernier*, meanwhile, was originally planned as the final scene of *Herculanum* but jettisoned as unperformable before the opera's premiere. It's the most overtly Berliozian of David's scores, alluding to both the final movement of the *Symphonie fantastique* and the 'Hostias' from the Requiem, before the chorus is divided into Elect and Damned, confronting each other in delirious counterpoint. There are some beautiful early motets and his songs are wonderfully direct in expression. The Third Symphony and First Piano Trio, however, betray an unease with absolute forms. Sonata movements repeat rather than develop. The Symphony has a haunting *Adagio* but completes its emotional trajectory too soon with the hard-hitting Scherzo. The finale feels oddly extraneous as a result.

The performances are fabulous. François-Xavier Roth and Les Siècles mine the textures and sonorities of *Christophe Colomb* for all their worth. Josef Wagner sounds suitably authoritative in the fearsomely taxing title-role, while Chantal Santon-Jeffrey and Julien Behr are touching as Fernand and Elvire, the lovers irrevocably parted by Columbus's voyage. Hervé Niquet and the Brussels Philharmonic take over for the orchestral works and *Le jugement dernier*. The latter is edge-of-your-seat stuff, with the Flemish Radio Choir thrilling at full throttle. Cyrille Dubois and Tristan Raës – the so-called Duo Contraste – tackle the songs with great commitment and stylish ease, and Jonas Vitaud brings the set to a close with some slight if exquisite piano pieces, written for performance in Parisian salons. It's a fascinating and outstanding achievement: highly recommended. **Tim Ashley**

## Messiaen

Poèmes pour Mi<sup>a</sup>. Trois petites  
liturgies de la Présence Divine<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Jane Archibald sop <sup>b</sup>Michael Brown pf <sup>b</sup>Cynthia  
Millar ondes martenot <sup>b</sup>Northwest Boychoir;

Seattle Symphony Orchestra / Ludovic Morlot  
Seattle Symphony Media © SSM1016 (59' • DDD)

<sup>b</sup>Recorded live at Benaroya Hall, Seattle,  
January 5, 7 & 8, 2017



It's becoming clear that Ludovic Morlot likes to do things his own way. His recent disc of Ives's *New England Holidays* (9/17) was startling for its utter lack of sentimentality. I've certainly never heard anything like it. And, here, with this pair of early masterpieces by Messiaen, Morlot again defies tradition – and, some might say, the composer's intentions as well.

*Poèmes pour Mi* is a strange amalgam of love song and religious meditation. Messiaen composed this cycle of nine songs in 1936-37 as a gift for his wife (whom he affectionately called 'Mi'), specifying that it be sung by a *grand soprano dramatique*. Jane Archibald has Donna Anna in her repertoire, although in style and tone she's clearly more of an ingénue. Yet this is just right for Morlot's unusually sleek and lithe interpretation. Archibald soars rapturously in songs like 'L'épouse' and 'Ta voix', caressing the languorous phrases with exquisite tenderness. 'Épouvante' is more playful than perturbed, perhaps, but this fits with the joyful character of the performance as a whole. Indeed, Morlot gives the impression that the entire cycle is moving inexorably towards the climax of the final song (beginning with the line 'Carillonne, mon cœur!'), which is so euphoric it practically vibrates.

Morlot takes a much bolder risk in the *Trois petites liturgies de la Présence Divine* (1944), substituting a boys' choir for the women's voices. His rationale appears reasonable: Messiaen wanted pure, angelic voices. But, in fact, this change alters the very nature of the work by removing even the barest hint of sensuality from music that is often wonderfully sensuous. Still, there are intriguing results to be savoured. I like the feral quality of the boys in the second movement, particularly when Morlot makes the most of the orchestral texture. Listen at 2'43", where the voices are accompanied by the swooping ondes martenot and growling double basses. Indeed, the boys sing beautifully throughout, despite a few minor lapses in rhythmic attentiveness. In both works, the

Seattle Symphony show themselves to be thriving under Morlot's scrupulous direction. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

## Monteverdi

Vespro della Beata Vergine

Dunedin Consort / John Butt

Linn © ② CKD569 (94' • DDD • T/t)



Anyone expecting a John Butt Monteverdi *Vespers* to be in the liturgical

reconstruction mould of Andrew Parrott (or indeed Butt's own recording of the *St John Passion*), or to seek a 'different' version of the piece (as in his 'Dublin' *Messiah* or E flat version of the Bach *Magnificat*) can quickly be disabused. Instead he presents it in the customary order with no chant additions, accepting the view that this 'work' is a collection of sacred pieces deliberately ordered in the general shape of an 'imaginary' Vespers service. In other words, the *Vespers* as most people know it.

Butt's other decisions are perhaps more predictable: a consort of solo voices, never rising to more than 10; high-ish pitch with downward transpositions for 'Lauda Jerusalem' and the *Magnificat*; and virtually no instrumental doubling of voices except where Monteverdi actually asked for it. The result is a 'chamber' version in which clarity of detail and the beauty of individual voices (recorded fairly closely and in many places clearly recognisable) provide an alternative to the grand gestures and bold colours of other more monumental performances. It also allows for plenty of attention to text, not just in the solo motets but in the larger psalm-settings as well. Not that the work ends up sounding like a set of keening madrigals; the singing in the solo motets is ardent all right, but with an underlying poise, nowhere more memorably than in 'Audi coelum', where the *tutti* entry at 'omnes' caresses rather than overwhelms, and, instead of tumbling away, the succeeding pages are bathed in exquisite Marian tenderness.

Butt's innate ability to shape a movement is regularly on show elsewhere. 'Dixit Dominus' intensifies threateningly towards its mention of the day of wrath, 'Pulchra es' takes a subtle step up in urgency whenever the second soprano joins in, and the final chorus of the *Magnificat* builds steadily and calmly to its grand finish. The contours of the music are further delineated by another of Butt's performance decisions, which is to find tempo relationships which lead to the

triple-time sections being about half the speed we have become used to hearing. It is a trend that seems to be gaining a hold – La Compagnia del Madrigale used it in their recent recording (Glossa, 7/17), as did I Fagiolini in their ‘Other Vespers’ (Decca, 7/17) – and further serves to give these *Vespers* dignity and grace. The sometimes frantic ‘Sonata sopra Sancta Maria’ is quite transformed by it.

The sound is first-rate as ever from Linn, with a sampled Italian chest organ discreetly adding warmth and incisiveness. With so many *Vespers* recordings out there, this one joins the ranks of those with both a character of its own and something to say.

Lindsay Kemp

## Pasek/Paul

Dear Evan Hansen

Original Broadway Cast

Atlantic © 7567 86625-1 (57) • DDD • T



Benj Pasek and Justin Paul will, of course, forever be best known as the composers of

*La La Land* and in particular an insidiously memorable little ditty called ‘City of stars’. But despite the best efforts of the media and a string of misinformed critics, *La La Land* was in no sense a musical but rather a homage to an age of innocence and romance where song and dance served as a kind of escapism from reality.

By contrast, their smash-hit Broadway musical *Dear Evan Hansen* could hardly inhabit a more different world. Where *La La Land* invokes the past and embraces a rosy nostalgia, *Dear Evan Hansen* chimes with the present and anticipates the future; a ‘virtual’ reality. It could hardly be more of a ‘now’ show. It begins not with music but with the roar of the internet and it centres around a latter-day ‘everyman’: young Evan Hansen, a high-school senior with a social anxiety disorder. His therapist suggests that he write letters to himself expressing why every day will be a good day, and one of these letters inadvertently becomes the catalyst for a chain reaction of misunderstandings and untruths. We are in a world of instant and often false gratification where a ‘like’ on Facebook is sometimes all that stands between one lonely individual and another. In short, the social interaction that is as feverishly proactive as it is inconsequential.

One song introduces and defines our eponymous protagonist and indeed the Tony Award-winning actor who plays him, Ben Platt. It’s called ‘Waving through a

window’ and it is quite simply one of the most brilliant contemporary show songs of recent times. It’s brilliant because it presents Evan’s isolation and agitation in such a way as to invite us to share it. It conveys the desperation of his misdirected energy and in the ‘tap-tap-tappin’ refrain (once heard, forever in your head) the world’s keyboards desperately seek a connection that may or may not exist. There are wild switches of register from full voice into anxious falsetto – instability in musical terms – there are frenetic repetitions, and the shock modulation towards the close is an exhilarating cry from the heart.

Where do you go from there? Well, pretty much everywhere. Evan’s near-catastrophic journey to self-recognition and acceptance is chronicled in a terrific set of songs (texts included), each a true amplification of Steven Levenson’s painfully topical book. ‘For forever’ is a peach of a song, the friendship, the kinship that Evan so craves played out in his imagination while we the audience will it to be so. There is humour, too, to leaven the ache of the score and the number ‘Sincerely, Me’ amusingly apes the world of internet deception.

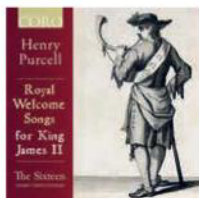
But what really sets Pasek and Paul’s work apart is the emotional resonance of their melodies. The pop-rock nowness is painted in a contemporary funkiness, keyboards and guitars, acoustic and electric, dominating – but the soul of these songs is personal and timeless. I’ve been hooked since first hearing. **Edward Seckerson**

## Purcell

‘Royal Welcome Songs for King James II’ Chacony, Z730. God is gone up, Z107. A New Irish Tune (‘Lilliburlero’), Z646. A New Scotch Tune, Z655. Save me, O God, Z51. Sound the trumpet, beat the drum, Z335. True Englishmen drink a good health, Z284. When on my sick bed I languish, Z144. Ye tuneful Muses, Z344

The Sixteen / Harry Christophers

Coro © COR16151 (64) • DDD • T/V



From the choral anthems of the Field of the Cloth of Gold to Shostakovich’s

Seventh Symphony, the role of music as propaganda is a familiar one. But not all repertoire of this kind has endured beyond its original context. Purcell’s ‘Welcome Songs’ are some of the composer’s least-performed works – occasional pieces that have never quite managed to escape their origins. Now a new series of recordings

from Harry Christophers and The Sixteen revisits them, throwing open the window they offer on to the embattled politics of their age.

Composed to mark the return of court to London after the summer, the Welcome Songs (of which two – *Ye tuneful Muses* and *Sound the trumpet, beat the drum* are featured here) were an annual chance to reaffirm the mastery and authority of James II – the Catholic monarch of an Anglican England, whose throne was by no means secure. Their extravagant praises and lofty tone (James and his Queen Mary are apostrophised at length as Caesar and Urania) present an interesting challenge to a composer whose interest would soon turn away from the restrictions of chapel and court towards the greater freedoms and possibilities of the stage. If that sounds worthy rather than musically exciting, then it gives entirely the wrong impression of performances that bring out not only the formal, ritual aspects of these works but also their subversive wit and creativity – a great composer kicking against the confines of his genre.

Using just 12 string players and eight singers, Christophers creates a vivid sense of celebration and occasion, conjuring blustering trumpet fanfares and drum-rolls from his ensemble, while his solo singers pre-empt the textural variety and rhetorical sensitivity of Purcell’s stage works in the choruses, duets, canons and miniature arias that make up each work. Of the two Welcome Songs, it’s *Sound the trumpet* that stands apart for the sheer quality of its instrumental writing. Casting aside the rather unyielding text, Purcell’s true invention shows itself here in the graceful dances and compact invention of these episodes.

Alexandra Coghlan

## Ristori

Didone abbandonata<sup>a</sup>. Lavinia a Turno<sup>a</sup>.

Nice a Tirsi<sup>a</sup>. Oboe Concerto<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>María Savastano sop <sup>b</sup>Jon Olaberria ob

Ensemble Diderot / Johannes Pramsohler vn

Audax © ADX13711 (68) • DDD • T/V



Giovanni Alberto Ristori (c1692-1753) came to prominence composing operas,

such as a setting of *Orlando furioso* (1713) produced in Venice by Vivaldi. Thereafter he served as organist, harpsichordist and music teacher at the Dresden/Polish court for nearly 40 years. Most of his music was



A vivid sense of celebration and occasion: Harry Christophers and The Sixteen shed light on Purcell's little-performed Welcome Songs

lost in bombardments of Dresden in 1760 and 1944 but meritorious fluency and expressive word-painting are revealed in three cantatas on poems written by Princess Maria Antonia (who married Prince Friedrich Christian of Saxony in 1747).

*Lavinia a Turno* and *Didone abbandonata* (both 1748) were inspired by tragic episodes from Virgil's *Aeneid* that recount grieving or forsaken lovers *in extremis*. The first performances were sung by the crown princess herself, who was clearly no shrinking violet; she was a member of the Arcadian Academy, corresponded with Metastasio about her poetry (which he admired), and must have been a decent soprano. Maria Savastano shrewdly balances lyrical elegance and dramatic anguish in numerous extremely dynamic accompanied recitatives and theatrically charged arias; the singing is uniformly passionate in tone and technically excellent, even if a little more limpid gracefulness might have increased the potential charm of these cantatas.

Violinist Johannes Pramsohler directs Ensemble Diderot with lively attention to detail in the melodramatic accompanied recitatives that depict the abandoned Dido's oscillations between heartbreak,

fury and suicide, and in contrasting arias Savastano navigates several difficult passages of extended coloratura with impressive skill. As an afterpiece, an oboe concerto presumably written for the Italian virtuoso Antonio Besozzi (employed at Dresden from 1739) is played by soloist Jon Olaberria with sophisticated charm and spontaneity. **David Vickers**

## Sviridov

Russia Cast Adrift (arr Rezetdinov)<sup>a</sup>. Snow is Falling<sup>b</sup>. Music for Chamber Orchestra

<sup>a</sup>Mila Shkirtil *mez* <sup>b</sup>Sergey Voloshchuk *hn* <sup>b</sup>Nikolay Mazhara *pf* <sup>a</sup>Boys of the St Petersburg Radio and Television Children's Choir; <sup>a</sup>Rimsky-Korsakov Music College Female Choir; St Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra / Yuri Serov

Naxos ® 8 573685 (65' • DDD)

Texts and translations available from [naxos.com](http://naxos.com)



Sviridov's *Russia Adrift* (also translated as *Russia Cast Adrift* – the Russian is *Otchalivshaya Rus'*; either will work) is becoming something of a classic outside the composer's native land. Having recently reviewed an orchestral version

made for Dmitri Hvorostovsky (Delos, 6/17), who had already recorded the work in its piano version, I am delighted to come across this recording of an arrangement by Leonid Rezetdinov for mezzo-soprano and orchestra. It's just as powerful as the original version: Mila Shkirtil has an expressive range every bit the equal of Hvorostovsky and the additional resonance of the 'Russian alto' tradition as manifest in Rachmaninov's *Vigil* and Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky* – it should also not be forgotten that it was Elena Obraztsova who gave the first performance.

In addition, we have a beautiful three-movement 'small cantata' to words by Pasternak, *Sneg idyot*, from 1965, in which the Rimsky-Korsakov Music College Female Choir and the Boys of the St Petersburg Radio and Television Children's Choir show their mettle, and *Music for Chamber Orchestra*, from a year earlier. This latter suggests in many ways a mixture between Shostakovich's *The Assault on Beautiful Gorky* and First Piano Concerto, but it undoubtedly has its own strength of character, thus providing much more than a mere interlude between the cantata and the song-cycle. An important addition to the ever-increasing Sviridov discography. **Ivan Moody**

## Wilkinson

### 'The Sunlight on the Garden'

At the Manger. Birdspeak. Chapels. Come away, Death. Crabbed Age and Youth. Eternal Summer. The Garden. The Gate in the Wall. Grantchester. Heaven. The Hour-Glass. Joly Jankyn. Kiss. Maude Gonne Takes Down a Book. O do not love too long. The Owl and the Pussycat. Politics. Proud Songsters. Running to Paradise. Spring and Fall. The Sunlight on the Garden. To a Young Girl. The Wind and the Moon. Winter Snow

Mhairi Lawson *sop* Clare Wilkinson *mez*

James Gilchrist *ten* Matthew Brook *bass*

Ian Buckle, Anna Markland *pf*

Signum © SIGCD516 (65' • DDD • T)



Stephen Wilkinson, who turned 98 this spring, is probably best known as the conductor who led the BBC Northern Singers from 1954 until they became the Britten Singers in 1993. As a composer, however, he has a substantial body of vocal and choral music to his credit, and 'The Sunlight on the Garden' marks the first appearance on disc of a selection of his songs, written over a career spanning 80 years. The driving force behind it is his daughter and champion, the mezzo Clare Wilkinson, for whom some of his more recent songs were written.

She herself compares him to Finzi, Gurney and Quilter. There are, however, elements of expressionism in his music, an emotional concentration and a sharp sense of irony that make him at times strikingly original. Yeats features prominently in a choice of poets which ranges from Shakespeare to Auden and MacNeice, though, Coleridge excepted, he seemingly avoids the major Romantics. Settings are rooted in textual detail and accompaniments are succinct, with rarely an extraneous note. There are fine things here. A spectral scherzo summons the ghosts that haunt the vicarage lawn in a setting of Brooke's 'Grantchester', and the text fragments as time runs out in the *perpetuum mobile* of 'The Hour-Glass'. The harmonic irresolution of 'At the Manger' probes the Virgin Mary's anguish at the thought of Christ's future suffering. 'Politics' says everything that needs to be said about middle-aged responsibility and erotic regret in just over a minute.

Divided between four singers and two pianists, the songs are persuasively done, too. Clare Wilkinson's warm tone and quiet restraint in 'At the Manger' and 'Heaven' contrast with the more overt brightness of Mhairi Lawson, exquisite

in 'Winter Snow' and 'Proud Songsters'. Matthew Brook has a nice line in roguish irony, heard to excellent advantage in 'Running to Paradise' and the epigrammatic 'Kiss'. Best of all, perhaps, is James Gilchrist, whose wonderful way with words enables him to encompass the bitter humour of 'Chapels', the sweetness of 'Grantchester' and the dark lyricism of 'The Sunlight on the Garden', a wartime setting of MacNeice that gives the disc its title. Ian Buckle and Anna Markland are the exemplary pianists. **Tim Ashley**

## 'Crazy Girl Crazy'

Berg Lulu-Suite<sup>a</sup> Berio Sequenza III

Gershwin Girl Crazy Suite (arr Elliott/Hannigan)<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Ludwig Orchestra / Barbara Hannigan *sop*

Alpha © (CD + DVD) ALPHA293

(57' + 20' • DDD • T/t)

DVD: 'Music is Music', a film by Mathieu Amalric



One of music's great risk-takers, Barbara Hannigan goes out on a limb with 'Crazy

Girl Crazy', her debut album as both conductor and singer, in which she flanks the *Lulu Suite* with Berio's unaccompanied *Sequenza III* and a suite from Gershwin's *Girl Crazy*, arranged in tandem with the Broadway orchestrator Bill Elliott and scored for the same forces as the Berg. The accompanying art-house documentary, *Music is Music*, integral to the whole, is the work of actor-director Mathieu Amalric, whose road movie *Tournée* won him Best Director at Cannes in 2010.

In her booklet notes, Hannigan forges subjective and interpretative links between the three works. When she first sang Lulu her 'perceptions of performance, love and death were changed', she writes. The disc is 'a hall of mirrors' in which *Sequenza III* and *Girl Crazy* serve as 'reflections of Lulu from varying angles and stages of her life'. *Sequenza III*, with its yearning for stability and space, is consequently emblematic of the teenage Lulu finding 'her voice, her words and her place in the world'. 'But not for me', with which she opens the *Girl Crazy* suite, has links to 'the lonely Geschwitz', while 'Embraceable you', which follows, inhabits, she claims, comparable emotional territory to Lulu's relationship with Alwa.

Irrespective of whether you agree with all this, the disc is uneven. Fine singer though Hannigan is, she seems less assured here as a conductor, and the *Lulu Suite*, in particular, proves problematic. The Ostinato and Variations have

a certain gritty force but the outer movements lack drama despite speeds that are by no means inordinately slow. Her voice soars exquisitely in the Lied, though we could do with more of the words. Purists might jib at Hannigan's reharmonisation of Gershwin, complete with note rows and Ligeti tone clusters, though her vocals are exuberant and the playing stylish. It's *Sequenza III*, however, written for Berio's muse Cathy Berberian, that is the high point. Transposed upwards it acquires both an unnerving vulnerability and a tentative optimism, where Berberian sounds world-weary and sad. It's a beautiful performance.

Just as Hannigan conducts as she sings, so the members of the Ludwig Orchestra sing as they play, forming the Hollywood-style chorus that serenades her in 'Embraceable you'. This only becomes apparent in Amalric's film, which interweaves rehearsal footage with shots of the Nova Scotia landscape in which Hannigan grew up. Amalric intones the text – Hannigan's own, at times close to her booklet notes – over a soundtrack that deliriously elides all three works, as phrases from Berio morph into Geschwitz's final threnody and the Ludwig Orchestra sing 'Embraceable you' in extraordinary counterpoint over the *Lulu Suite*'s *Adagio*. Much of it is riskier than the disc and, in its idiosyncratic way, more consistently successful. **Tim Ashley**

## 'The Ear of the Huguenots'

Animuccia Gia fu presa da te Anonimus

Chi vuol seguir la guerra Costeley Noblesse

gist au coeur du vertueux Estocart Le

monde un jour contre Vertu faché.

Peccantem me quotidie Goudimel Dieu

nous soit doux et favorable Le Jeune Cigne

je suis de candeur. Dieu nous soit doux et

favorable. Povre coeur entourné Mauduit

Pardon et justice il me plaît de chanter

Palestrina Missa Ut re mi fa sol la – Agnus

Dei Il Servin Stellata coeli

Huelgas Ensemble / Paul Van Nevel

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi © 88985 41176-2

(65' • DDD • T/t)



The first main virtue of this issue is that nothing here seems to have been recorded

before, apart from Palestrina's Mass *Ut re mi fa sol la* (of which they perform only the two *Agnus Dei* sections). The second is that Paul Van Nevel has assembled 10 of the very best singers for this kind of music from anywhere in Europe; and they do



Girl Crazy: Barbara Hannigan takes on the dual role of conductor and singer

sound gorgeous. In addition, he has a very creditable group of four string players to accompany them.

But it is the kind of CD that leaves the listener asking whether there is perhaps a hidden point that is not explained. All in all, it is probably true to say that the Huguenot era was not particularly productive of fine and challenging music. The three psalm-settings with which Van Nevel begins are about as threadbare as any of the earliest Protestant music, and they remain so despite the changes in texture and orchestration applied here.

Then comes the surprise, namely music for the papal 'celebration' of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre in Paris. As it happens, we know nothing of the music performed on the occasion, but the programme is nicely filled with two *laude* and the Palestrina movement already mentioned.

The disc ends with five larger pieces, all apparently composed after the 1572 massacre more or less put an end to the Huguenot movement as a major religious influence. Some of these pieces are more interesting than others; and the closing work – Claude Le Jeune's *Povre coeur entourné* – works particularly well.

David Fallows

## 'Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott'

'Luther and the Music of the Reformation'

**Altenburg** Nun komm der Heiden Heiland  
**Bernhard** Missa super Christ unser Herre – Kyrie;  
 Gloria **Burck** Die deutsche Passion nach  
 Johannes **M Franck** Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott  
**Gesius** Der du bist drei in Einigkeit  
**Hammerschmidt** Freude, Freude, grosse Freude.  
 Wie lieblich sind seine Wohnungen **Luther** Dies  
 sind die heiligen zehn Gebot **Othmayr** Mein  
 himmlischer Vater. O Mensch, bewein dein  
 Sünde gross **H Praetorius** Christ unser Herr zum  
 Jordan kam **M Praetorius** Es ist ein Ros'  
 entsprungen. Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott. Herre,  
 nun lässt du deinen Diener in Frieden fahren  
**Resinarius** Vater unser der du bist im Himmel  
**Scheidemann** Praeambulum in D minor **Scheidt**  
 Das alte Jahr vergangen ist. Ascendo ad Patrem  
 meum. Christ ist erstanden. Christ lag in  
 Todesbanden. Da Jesus an dem Kreuze stund.  
 Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ **Schein** Dies sind  
 die heiligen zehn Gebot. O Jesulein, mein  
 Jesulein **Schütz** Aus tiefer Not. Meine Seele  
 erhebt den Herren. Selig sind die Toten **Selle** Die  
 mit Tränen säen. Veni Sancte Spiritus **Siefert**  
 Puer natus in Bethlehem **Strungk** Lass mich dein  
 sein und bleiben **Steffens** Jesus Christus unser  
 Heiland **Walter** Wir glauben all an einen Gott  
**Vox Luminis / Lionel Meunier** with **Bart Jacobs** org  
 Ricercar © 2 RIC376 (155' • DDD • T/t)



This year has seen several fine recordings celebrating the quincentenary of the founding act of the

Reformation but this is comfortably the most searching and artistically rewarding that I've listened to. The easy option is to confine oneself to Schütz, Praetorius, even Bach or Telemann in some cases – never mind that the earliest of these was born well after Martin Luther's death in 1546. While Schütz and Praetorius do feature here, there is also much earlier music, stretching right back to Johann Walter, one of Luther's earliest musical collaborators. The music is of consistently high quality, the selections by 'minor' figures frequently as telling as those by acknowledged masters. Breadth of chronological coverage is matched by breadth of genre: there's everything from Latin motets (of which Luther was very fond) to organ chorale variations and a short German Mass. Vox Luminis (here with organist Bart Jacobs) give themselves plenty a scope with the double-CD format, and fill both discs generously.

Programmatic flair is backed up by performances and a sound recording to match. Vox Luminis have received their fair share of accolades (their Schütz *Musikalisches Exequien* was *Gramophone* Record of the Year across all categories in 2012) but in ambition certainly, perhaps even in execution, this may be finer still. Among the vocal selections, Scheidt's polychoral *Ascendo ad Patrem meum* is exquisite. The *Veni Sancte Spiritus* by Thomas Selle that follows probably looks slight on paper but some memorably stratospheric sopranos impart a hair-raising intensity. The selections for organ include some gems, too: the Thomas organ of St Vincent Church, Ciboure, has some extraordinary registrations for the chorale line of *Lass mich dein sein und bleiben* and Praetorius's monumental variations on *Ein feste Burg* (arguably the quintessential chorale) stand comparison with Sweelinck. And that's just the first disc. The acoustic variety is such that I was surprised to find on second hearing that Vox Luminis achieve all this with just voices and organ.

The accompanying long-format booklet is splendidly produced, the plentiful colour illustrations reinforcing the immediacy of the acoustic experience. The accompanying notes place the music usefully and legibly in its historical context. This must be a contender for my pick of the year come December. **Fabrice Fitch**

## 'Händel Goes Wild'

**Handel** *Alcina* – Act 3, Sinfonia; *Mi lusinga il dolce affetto*<sup>a</sup>; *Verdi prati*<sup>a</sup>. *Amadigi di Gaula* – *Pena tiranna*<sup>a</sup>. *Giulio Cesare* – *Piangerò la sorte mia*<sup>a</sup>. *Rinaldo* – *Cara sposa*<sup>a</sup>; *Lascia ch'io pianga*; *Venti turbini*<sup>a</sup>. *Semele*<sup>b</sup> – *O sleep, why dost thou leave me*; *Where'er you walk*. *Serse* – *Ombra mai fu*<sup>a</sup>. *Solomon* – *Arrival of the Queen of Sheba*. *Il trionfo del Tempo e della Verità*, HWV46 – *Tu del ciel ministro eletto*<sup>b</sup> **Kapsberger** *Canario Vivaldi* Concerto for Strings, RV157 – 1st movt <sup>b</sup>**Nuria Rial** sop <sup>a</sup>**Valer Sabadus** countertenor **L'Arpeggiata** / **Christina Pluhar**  
Erato © 9029 58116-9 (76' • DDD • T/t)  
Deluxe edition © 9029 58117-0



You could be forgiven if you failed to recognise the overture to

Handel's *Alcina* behind the jazz piano breaks, plucked bass and klezmer clarinet of this disc's opening track, though you might guess even before a violin skitters through that Baroque music is in there somewhere, and it wouldn't take much longer after that to realise that Handel is its subject.

The latest project from baroque experimentalists L'Arpeggiata tackles a composer perhaps less obviously suited to the group's brand of improvisatory reimagining than their 2014 Purcell disc (5/14); but if Handel's music does have a more consistently 'high art' air to it, Christina Pluhar and her band of baroque and jazz musicians have found a viable way of working with it. And as with their Purcell, for all the new ideas they explore, it is the composer's expressive melodic genius that is at the heart of everything.

For one thing, noble outpourings of vocal expression such as 'Cara sposa', 'Lascia ch'io pianga' and 'Piangerò la sorte mia' lose nothing of their emotive power when performed here by soprano Nuria Rial, countertenor Valer Sabadus or indeed cornettist Doron David Sherwin. They deliver them pretty much as Handel wrote them, too, though the accompaniments might feature jazz bass or Middle Eastern percussion, or the song might be embedded in freer improvisations from Gianluisi Trovesi on clarinet and Francesco Turrissi on piano. (Some nice jokes here by the way: tinkly toy piano for Semele's 'O sleep, why does thou leave me', a walking bass for 'Where'er you walk'.) It is interesting to see that it is mostly Handel's slow arias that have lent themselves to this treatment, for the most part provoking jazz that is sympathetically cool and gentle; for more energy L'Arpeggiata look to purely instrumental improvisations on the *Arrival of the Queen of Sheba*, a Vivaldi chaconne and a Kapsberger *Canario*.

Whether or not you like this kind of project, this one is expertly and beautifully done, with Handel's lyrical greatness remaining plain for all to see. **Lindsay Kemp**

## 'Music from the Peterhouse Partbooks, Vol 5'

**Anonymous** *Missa sine nomine*. *Kyrie Orbis factor* **Hunt Ave Maria mater Dei** **Mason Ve nobis miseris** **Sturmy Exultet in hac die**  
**Blue Heron** / **Scott Metcalfe**  
Blue Heron © BHCD1007 (56' • DDD • T/t)



This impressive recording is the fifth of a series devoted to the music of the

Peterhouse Partbooks, so called because, though copied by a single scribe at Magdalen College, Oxford, in the closing years of Henry VIII's reign, they are currently housed in the college of that name. Part of the set – notably the tenor partbook – having been lost, the

reconstruction of the music not surviving elsewhere has been the life's work of the British scholar Nicholas Sandon, which has made possible this extensive survey of the repertory.

Blue Heron are a multivalent group. Here they sing with two or three voices to a part, using adult trebles for the top ones, as is customary in this repertory. Their tone and approach is more reminiscent of English ensembles than most mixed American choirs I can think of (more full-bodied than Pomerium, for example, or even some English groups one could name). As the final volume of a long-term project, it is right that this should count among the most polished, but I suspect that their sound may take some listeners by surprise. At full stretch there isn't a weak link from top to bottom, and at their best (that is, usually) the trebles stand comparison with those of far better-known ensembles either side of the Atlantic: try the Mass that forms the centrepiece here.

By and large the series has focused on music whose performance is only possible through Sandon's ministrations. Among the high points of previous instalments are three antiphons by Hugh Aston (Vol 1), Nicholas Ludford's *Missa Regnum mundi* and a *Salve regina* by Richard Pygott (Vol 2). Those names will be familiar to aficionados of this repertory, but here the focus is on figures who are either really obscure or actually nameless. Don't let that put you off: the Mass in particular is superb. Whoever wrote it almost certainly knew Taverner's *Gloria tibi Trinitas*, for echoes of it abound, yet it is no slavish imitation. For this piece alone the disc is worth owning. The confident rendition of Hugh Sturmy's *Exultet in hac die* sets the tone and the more extended *Ve nobis miseris* by John Mason gives the male voices a chance to show off, but in the Mass things get seriously impressive. I doubt whether I'll be alone in thinking this one of the discoveries of the year. **Fabrice Fitch**

## 'Nostre Dame'

**Dufay Ave maris stella** **Iribarren Stabat mater** **Josquin Ave Maria virgo serena** **La Rue Magnificat** **Machaut Messe de Nostre Dame** **Michna Mariánské Ave** **Palestrina Ave Maria** **Victoria Ave Maria**. *Salve regina*  
**Vienna Vocal Consort**  
Klanglogo © KL1412 (66' • DDD • T/t)



Nowadays it is rare for recordings of early polyphony to span Machaut, Victoria



Baroque experimentalists L'Arpeggiata and their director Christina Pluhar cast an improvisatory spell on the music of Handel

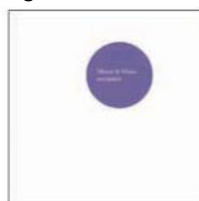
and everything in between. The Vienna Vocal Consort are a mixed *a cappella* quintet whose solid basic timbre bespeaks a certain experience of singing together. Given the decision to be quite so wide-ranging, one anticipates that the challenge of such a programme is to adapt the performance style from work to work.

The juxtaposition of the two composers just named at the very start is puzzling to begin with (all the more so since the opening *Ave Maria*, though credited to Jacobus Gallus, is in fact the four-voice setting by Victoria), and Machaut's Mass lacks the focus and rhythmic incisiveness that might have counteracted the ensemble's melifluous tone. Thereafter, the absence of stylistic awareness comes more sharply into focus: the cadential pitches in Dufay go uninflected; the basic tempo chosen for La Rue's *Magnificat* is far too slow and causes all sorts of technical problems (try track 11); in the earlier selections the number of misreadings (not only in a relatively little-known work like La Rue's but in famous ones like Machaut's or Josquin's) is surprisingly high; and so on. Things improve slightly in the later pieces but the cautious tone remains the same. Besides, Machaut and (especially problematically) La Rue make up two-thirds of the disc. One regrets that a more knowledgeable production team had not had more meaningful input.

Fabrice Fitch

## 'Silence & Music'

**Britten** The Evening Primrose **Dove** Who killed Cock Robin? **Elgar** Owls (An Epitaph). There is sweet music, Op 53 No 1 **Grainger** Brigg Fair. The Three Ravens **Howells** The summer is coming **MacMillan** The Gallant Weaver **Stanford** The Blue Bird, Op 119 No 3 **Vaughan Williams** Bushes and Briars. Rest. Silence and Music. The Turtle Dove. The winter is gone **Warlock** All the flowers of the spring **Gabrieli Consort / Paul McCreesh** Signum © SIGCD490 (68' • DDD • T)



If you look back through the Gabrieli Consort's discography you can see a new

trend emerging. Among the large-scale works for choir and orchestra – the Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Monteverdi, Bach – are increasingly scattered discs of miniatures from the English choral tradition. Up until now these have been consistently sacred, but this new recording, 'Silence & Music', takes the ensemble's first steps into secular repertoire in music by Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Warlock, Grainger and more.

In doing so, McCreesh is walking in good company. Tenebrae (Bene Arte/Signum, 10/16) and The Sixteen (Coro, 11/15) have both recently released albums of similar works, suggesting that the part-song might finally be throwing off its

unfashionable reputation as the poor cousin of the anthem.

There are some interesting comparisons. Stanford's *The Blue Bird* (its top line taken, in both cases, by full sopranos) sets Tenebrae's heat-haze warmth and blowsy loveliness against the chaste control and immaculate beauty of the Gabrieli. James MacMillan's *The Gallant Weaver*, with its delicate overlapping strands of upper voices, similarly gives us cool restraint and wide-shot distance from McCreesh and his forces compared to the more textured immediacy of The Sixteen.

Preference will be down to individual taste but with such highly perfumed music there's much to be said for performances that keep things clean, understated. The musical care and the easy, unforced shaping of lines from the Gabrieli is all the ornament works like Elgar's *There is sweet music* and Howells's *The summer is coming* need, and the two Vaughan Williams settings – *Silence and Music* and the expansive *Rest* – sit just the right side of sentimentality.

Careful programming offsets so much sweetness with the astringent virtuosity of Jonathan Dove's *Who killed Cock Robin?* (thrillingly and wittily dramatised here) and the bizarre, near-Gothic excess of Grainger's arrangement of *The Three Ravens*, complete with lugubrious harmonium. The result is a clever mixture of moods – a disc that takes the part-song into the 21st century not only in repertoire but also in style. **Alexandra Coghlan**

# REISSUES

**Rob Cowan** on a magnificent Russian music survey  
and **Mike Ashman** welcomes a set of Maria Callas live

## *From Russia with love*

More treasures from the Evgeny Svetlanov recorded legacy

Even more than with Volume 1 of this handsome and weighty 'Anthology of Russian Symphonic Music' (7/17) – and now, for Volume 2, called **Russian and Soviet Music** – Yevgeny Svetlanov's talents as a magnetic interpreter are fully on display, sometimes in music that is relatively unfamiliar. I'm thinking in particular of **Mieczysław Weinberg's** Sinfonietta No 1 (1948), its wildly stamping finale sounding like one of Skalkottas's *Greek Dances*, or the *Rhapsody on Moldavian Themes* (also 1948). You might call it 'the *Romanian Rhapsody* that Enescu didn't compose': dive in at 7'27" for fired-up playing that courts danger in every bar. Beyond Weinberg comes **German Galynin**, an army volunteer during Operation Barbarossa and a student of Shostakovich and Miaskovsky, whose First Piano Concerto is given a stunning performance by Dmitry Bashkirov. Sample Bashkirov's dazzling repeated notes in the *allegro vivo* finale. Remarkable!

### *A real treat, to be purchased with justifiably high expectations*

In 1948 Stalin appointed the still-controversial figure of **Tikhon Khrennikov** as Secretary of the Union of Soviet Composers. We're given three symphonies and piano concertos (Khrennikov himself plays them), two violin concertos (Vadim Repin) and the Second Cello Concerto (Mikhail Khomister) as well as fragments from the ballet *Love for Love*. It's not difficult to embrace this busy, upbeat, occasionally tuneful, and well-crafted music, which is generally well played. The Red Army veteran **Andrei Eshpai**, an ethnic

Mari, died as recently as 2015: his disc is a highlight of the set, given his wild, jazz-inflected *Concerto grosso* and his arresting Second Violin Concerto with the impressive virtuoso Eduard Grach, a Kogan-Heifetz sound-alike.

**Prokofiev** is awarded paltry representation with one major highlight, *Peter and the Wolf*, vividly narrated (in Russian) by Natalia Sats, who actually commissioned the work. Aside from the words, Svetlanov's animated performance made me realise why I so dislike many recordings of *Peter*: they're far too slow. This version flies along and carries you with it for the duration. Sats starts where the story starts. There's no tiresome 'intro'. **Alexandra Pakhmutova**, who was much loved by both the Soviet establishment and the public, is best known for her 400-odd songs whereas her orchestral music, much of which is immediately appealing, includes a dramatic 12-minute Concerto for Orchestra, given here under Svetlanov with considerable panache. So is **Rodion Shchedrin's** even more striking Second Concerto for Orchestra, *The Chimes*, recorded live in 1977. Unlike Khrennikov, Shchedrin has a memorably individual voice: his *Naughty Ditties* are genuinely entertaining while his piano concertos (where he performs as soloist), and music for *Anna Karenina* and *Not Love Alone* are all well worth hearing.

Among the **Rachmaninov** works included – and there are quite a few – are the three symphonies, Nos 2 and 3 in live recordings that took my breath away, the close of the Second given with a level of temperament (the recording can barely cope) that will likely draw you to your feet. The Third, which is more constricted as sound, is played with maximum flexibility: it reminds

me of Nikolai Golovanov's electrifying (if poorly recorded) mono version, as compelling a performance as you're ever likely to hear. The same goes for the *Symphonic Dances*, which, though not live, sound as if they are. A recording of the Second Piano Concerto with Nikolai Petrov is gripping but brittle.

**Scriabin** was always something of a Svetlanov speciality and his accounts of the five symphonies combine aching sensuality with high drama, the *Poem of Ecstasy* and *Prometheus* (the latter with Sviatoslav Richter playing the solo piano part) both recorded live. Alexei Nasedkin is the sensitive soloist in the Piano Concerto. As to **Shostakovich**, we're given Symphonies Nos 1, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10, the First (recorded live) and Tenth being especially fine. The cello concertos are played by Rostropovich, the First Violin Concerto by Leonid Kogan, all three performances hardly in need of critical endorsement from me. Incidentally Rostropovich's performances of the **Miaskovsky** Cello Concerto and **Glazunov's** *Concerto Ballata* are offered here in stereo whereas in Warners Classics' 'Rostropovich: Cellist of the Century' set, they're in mono. The Miaskovsky is from a few days later, whereas the Glazunov is the same performance. Rostropovich also plays Khachaturian's declamatory *Concerto-rhapsody*. The roughly contemporaneous (mono) version in Warner's set is with piano. Oistrakh-disciple Valery Klimov approximates 'his master's voice' in Khachaturian's Violin Concerto, a superb performance from all concerned. And then there's Svetlanov's *Rite of Spring*, raw, gutsy, abrasive, rhythmically alert and at times not entirely sure of itself. *Jeu de cartes* is elegant and lyrically played but a little underpowered.

Just as Tchaikovsky dominated the first volume of the anthology, **Glazunov** dominates the Second (in all, 16 discs are devoted to his music, including many shorter works). Given their scarcity in the concert hall, Glazunov's eight completed symphonies (the torso of a Ninth has been recorded elsewhere) have enjoyed some winning advocacy on disc, not least by Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, José Serebrier, Vladimir Fedoseyev and this Svetlanov series which lays claim to being the most compelling of all. Being a master of the Russian ballet idiom Svetlanov understands the music's balletic sweep. Works such as *Raymonda* and *Lady-Soubrette* (both are included in the set) are rarely at too far a distance, especially the glorious *Andante* opening of No 4, the warming romance of the Fifth's slow movement or the festive



The second volume of Evgeny Svetlanov's Anthology unearths some hugely rewarding curiosities

exuberance of its finale, here played with considerable brilliance. Symphonies Nos 6 and 7 are remarkable for the filmic contrasts of their material and Svetlanov homes in on the frequent transitions from gaiety to drama. In this context the impulsive, *Tristan*-esque paragraphs of the Sixth Symphony's first movement are let off the leash whereas the Eighth, with its heartfelt mesto slow movement, is rather more thickset than its predecessors, a nod in the direction of Nikolai Miaskovsky. Svetlanov adapts well to its greater sense of symphonic purpose.

Perhaps the crowning glory of Svetlanov's Russian discography is his complete recording of **Miaskovsky's** 27 symphonies – winner of a *Gramophone* Award back in 2008. What I personally love about Miaskovsky is the way his music shuns the limelight: its inward trajectory draws you to its own special space ... the drama is uniquely personal, the work of a musical introvert. And yet this oeuvre is often powerfully original. For the purposes of this latest 'Anthology' Melodiya have passed on the preferable option of

including the whole cycle and opted instead for a selection taking in roughly half of what's available. The choices however leave out at least four masterpieces. Why not the Sixth, Miaskovsky's longest and some would claim his most significant work in the genre, or the Tenth, premiered in 1928? The single-movement Thirteenth is another strange omission. And there's the Nineteenth for military band. What we do have, however, are symphonies Nos 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 14, 17, 18, 21, 22, 24 and 25-27. The quiet, harmonically dense opening of the Seventh (1922) has something of Scriabin's *Prometheus* about it – even the thematic material is similar – and the deeply impassioned *molto sostenuto* of Symphony No 24 (composed in 1943) must be among the highlights of Russian music from the period. Miaskovsky's lighter side is effectively exemplified by the opening *Allegro giocoso* of the divertimento-like Fourteenth Symphony while the concise and highly approachable Symphony No 21 (1940), here playing for just over 18 minutes, will be familiar to many through Morton Gould's Chicago recording.

Throughout this sequence Svetlanov never falters: his sense of commitment to Miaskovsky's cause draws us closer to some imposing and important repertoire that might otherwise have been unjustly consigned to the bottom drawer.

Also included are worthwhile works by **Anatoly Alexandrov, Rotislav Boiko, Rheinhold Glière, Zinony Kompaneyets, Arkady Mazayev, Boris Parsadanian, Nikolai Peiko and Grigory Zaborov**; so much to discover and relish, and so much time needed to absorb it all. And there's a valuable bonus disc, tucked into the side of the 151 hardback booklet provided. Volume 1 added a programme of Medtner piano music sympathetically played by Svetlanov himself and for Volume 2 Svetlanov plays a predominantly introspective Rachmaninov sequence: two of his *Moments musicaux* Op 16, the expansive B minor and the lyrical D flat major, two of the *Morceaux de fantaisie* Op 3, 'Elegy' and 'Melody', as well as the Prelude in D Op 23 No 6 and, perhaps most impressive of all, the *Vocalise* (the orchestral version is featured in the main body of the set). And that's not all: the bonus CD closes with Svetlanov reading some poetry by the legendary (and artistically significant) early twentieth century Russian Soviet Futurist poet, playwright, artist and actor **Vladimir Mayakovsky** who Stalin declared was 'the best and the most talented poet of our Soviet epoch'. Svetlanov's delivery is light in tone, often dramatic and colourfully inflected. You might like to follow it with his live recording of **Alexander Mosolov's** Futuristic, three-minute, heavy-industrial *Iron Foundry*.

The sound throughout varies from tolerably raucous to impressively cinematic. However, there are some curious omissions, just as there was in Volume 1 (for example Tchaikovsky's First Orchestral Suite, which Svetlanov did after all record). Aside from the missing Miaskovsky symphonies, why no *Alexander Nevsky* (Svetlanov's Melodiya version is among the best versions going) or Rachmaninov's *The Bells*? Is there a third, purely choral set, in the making? Whether or not that's the case, there is so much wonderful material here that even a lifetime of listening wouldn't be enough to fully absorb it. A real treat, not to be taken lightly but purchased with justifiably high expectations. **G**

## THE RECORDING

**Anthology of Russian and Soviet Symphonic Music**

Melodiya (56 discs) **M** MELCD1002481

# Maria Callas live

Warner Classics' second set commemorating the great soprano's art

There are truly marvels here – we'll come onto some of the small-print performance details later. But the first and greatest one is that the set exists at all. Warner Classics is to be congratulated. Who would have dreamed, even a decade or so ago, that a major label would release a taking-over and upgrading – a legitimization – of a good selection of the 'pirate', off-the-air performances of one of its leading artists? And, let's be honest, lower the bar of what is deemed acceptable to release from the technical point of view (much of which is explained in specific and unblushing detail on the inner sleeves of each recording).

Let's get out of the way first what, for some, will be the bad news. Here's a cornucopia of all the things opera record critics used to hate most: audience noise including hysterical, ill-timed applause; apparently over-loud participation by the prompter (the fault of the recordists' microphone-placing, not of theatrical practice); voices in and out of focus according to their current stage geography. And that's before we get on to performances where notes and whole bars are missing: the edition of the score used may often seem criminal in the light of more recent historically-informed researches, and ensemble work can be anything but together and slick. Furthermore a majority of these performances have been available before – and on CD, and for some time.

But this is Maria Callas. The 20 'complete' (heavily inverted commas) opera performances on disc, plus Blu-rays of excerpts from five concerts, plug material gaps in her original EMI (now Warner) catalogue. They have not been as well mastered, annotated and presented to the market previously as they are here now. With less aural distraction we can follow the progress of a voice that started as a dramatic soprano capable of Isolde and Brünnhilde (will even some fragments of these early performances ever surface?). The sound of the 1949 Naples *Nabucco* is still 'in a very poor state' (as Warners' own note has it) but Callas's Abigail, a role soon given up, has both tremendous power and an uncanny understanding of the psychology of a character often trampled over as a stand-and-belt-it-out part. In similar vein but in better sound – and



Treasure aplenty for Callas fans

conducted with real style by Erich Kleiber – is a 1951 *I vespri siciliani* from Florence. Callas again sounds to have embraced the psychology of a long and not over-performed part in addition to its vocal

## The 1955 Berlin Lucia Mad Scene is quite eerie in its simplicity and control

challenges (which include the famous 'Mercè, diletti amiche' which she used also for concert repertoire). For the first time you can hear details of what Kleiber was doing in the pit and that Callas's male colleagues (including Boris Christoff) are trying harder than many of the teams with which she was linked in these early days.

That's one side of the early Callas voice. Another is the death-defying virtuosity of the runs in Rossini's *Armida* (Florence three years later) where you might predict that this soprano would stay in the vocal canary repertoire all her professional life. Source recording is unimproveably terrible (12 minutes of Act 3 have been omitted as impossible) but the diva's agility has to be marvelled at. Much of this virtuosity survives in the slightly later Scala *Macbeth* –

a clear sonic improvement on previous outings with better bass and space around the solo voices – where, aside from providing the dark, ugly voice Verdi asks for, Callas can both outpoint her Macbeth in the virtuosity of the duet following the second Witches' scene and interpolate a D flat at the end of Act 1. A Mexican *Rigoletto* (1952) is rather defaced by lazy repertoire cuts, eccentric rallentandos from the pit and Piero Campolonghi's hammy sobbing in the title-role. But Callas's virtuosity above the stave and her almost psychologically scary use of a little girl voice for Gilda provide terrific insights into the plot, setting her performance at a level above the bull-fight atmosphere of much of the rest of the show (Di Stefano's indulgence in long-held notes manages some kind of marriage between this Latin excess and more restrained European style).

Also from Mexico City, in what we might call Callas's 'virtuoso diva' period, comes an *Aida* from 1951. One reviewer suggested that the tangible sensitivity here of Callas's performance of a role never too special for her elsewhere was 'writ large, perhaps partly in self-defense against a cast of brazen extroverts'. The performance has become famous to collectors for the E flat the soprano hurls forth at the end of Act 2 which encourages an already excitable audience to a state of pandemonium akin to that of those attending Toscanini's wartime Act 4 of *Rigoletto*. But even more remarkable is the depth of Callas's voice – the dark lower reach of 'Ritorna vincitor' suggests she could have been Amneris and looks forward to later mezzo triumphs in the French repertoire. Again, there is a remarkable range of well-thought out, unhackneyed emotions. Her 'support' includes Mario del Monaco at his most excitable and hectoring, but there's a splendid and rich Amneris from local girl Oralia Domínguez. The sound, despite a new source, still bears evidence of other radio stations intruding.

We know that Callas became a *bel canto* star almost literally overnight when she finished a run of *Walküre* Brünnhildes. There's a last (and still the only complete) sample of her Wagner here with the much distributed and overpraised Rome radio *Parsifal* of 1950. I can hear this Kundry's relevant ferocity and neurosis and the ability to cope with the high-lying passages at the end of Act 2 – but I find the Italian translation quite alienating.

But to bring Callas back onstream, so to speak, in the *bel canto* and lyrical works that would become her main repertoire, there's a goodly supply in this new collection of live

alternatives to the well-established (and often Walter Legge-produced) EMI studio series. And if the choices are not always 'first XI' – Covent Garden 1952 **Norma** instead of La Scala 1955, Lisbon 1958 **Traviata** instead of La Scala 1955 or 1956 with Giulini – the alternatives are easily available, if without Warners' special caring. Of the two or three classics here, the 1955 Berlin **Lucia di**

**Lammermoor** – when the Scala company travelled to Berlin to be accompanied by Karajan and the RIAS orchestra – probably takes the prize. Callas herself is at a mid-career vocal high (yes, already!) between her 'virtuoso diva' years and the later wear-and-tear of life. The Mad Scene – after which came, apparently, 10 minutes of curtain calls (not represented here) – is quite eerie in its simplicity and control, much less 'mad' than the studio versions. And the Sextet is encored – we hear that although only a fraction of the applause which sounded like a riot was imminent. Karajan, perhaps thinking of when he travelled pre-war to hear Toscanini in Italian opera, accompanies Callas like a limpet – he's less attentive to the other voices – and, even if the effect is a little plush (later in the 19th century) especially around di Stefano's over-veristic singing, there's a real magic in the air.

Elsewhere in the box there's a good if rather bizarrely cut (by conductor Gavazzeni?) **Anna Bolena**; the London **Norma** in which the sheer beauty of Callas's and Ebe Signani's 'Mira, O Norma' brings to mind its composer's desire to drive people 'mad with ecstasy' at his vocal writing; and a (relatively late but quite successful) 1960 **Poliuto** where the Milan audience are so excited to see Callas back that they drown out and stop the not very secure pizzicato accompanying her entry.

There's more magic in the air for the much-pirated/now legitimized second-time



Callas as Iphigenia at La Scala, Milan

collaborations with Leonard Bernstein who, in Cherubini's **Medea** (1953) and Bellini's **Sonnambula** (1955) harks us back to the dramatic time- (rather than period-) awareness of his Berlioz records. Quite simply, before our modern-day period recreations, this was the only performance of the Cherubini which captured the fire of the piece. This appears to have had its pitch raised but the resulting 'unprecedented presence' (according to Warner's note) produces a rather harsh effect. There are other Callas Medeas with better Giasones (Jon Vickers!) but none in which she is more blood-curdling. Equally strong, in a totally other way, is the Bellini in which Bernstein at first almost appears to be sending up the (deliberately) simple Swiss setting mirrored in the music but progresses to a simple, honest accompaniment to Callas's (also

deliberately) understated, hence more ambivalent, presentation of Amina. He also contributed to her vocal decorations.

The most important items in the remainder of the box are undoubtedly the Blu-ray transfers of the extant Callas concert films including (in **Tosca** Act 2 from 1964 Covent Garden) the only onstage complete act of an opera we have with her. Gobbi, it must be said, is rather melodramatic (Scarpia as sadist) and his policemen rather Sweeney Todd-like, but Callas's economy of movement is most telling. The Paris concert is also worthwhile for her acting into the music even in concert dress. Elsewhere the two Gluck items, **Alceste** and **Iphigenia in Tauride** ('not good', Otto Klemperer told her baldly) and Spontini's **La vestale** seem quaintly old-fashioned now with their big modern orchestral manners and Italian language. In **Andrea Chénier** (as in *Aida*) Callas matches restraint to del Monaco's hectic title-role and does a little composing herself in Act 3, singing as opposed to speaking

'Andrea, rivederlo'. The New York concert **Il pirata** will not please purists because of conductor Nicola Rescigno's editing but Callas makes a lot of not overmuch. Finally the London **Tosca** (first night of the same season as the filming of Act 2) finds the men musically untogether but Callas herself in more interesting colours and voice than the studio remake which preceded it.

The box has no librettos (or links to any) but good booklet-notes – on the works in the disc albums themselves and on Callas in a separate booklet with performance lists and good photos. **Mike Ashman**

## THE RECORDING

**Maria Callas Live (Remastered Recordings 1949-1964)** Warner Classics (42 discs) +  
③ 9029 58447-0

# Opera



## Neil Fisher on Angela Gheorghiu's welcome return to the studio:

'The title-track by Angelo Mascheroni suits Gheorghiu's aptitude for dreamy reverie and lyrical sentiment' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 102**



## Mark Pullinger casts an ear over Jonas Kaufmann's latest disc:

'Kaufmann's tenor is duskily beautiful, but too much here relies on a velvety mezza voce cruise control' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 102**

## Faccio

### Hamlet

**Pavel Černoch** *ten* ..... Amleto  
**Claudio Sgura** *bar* ..... Claudio  
**Eduard Tsanga** *bass-bar* ..... Polonio  
**Sébastien Soulés** *bass-bar* ..... Orazio  
**Bartosz Urbanowicz** *bass-bar* ..... Marcello  
**Paul Schweinester** *ten* ..... Laerte  
**Iulia Maria Dan** *sop* ..... Ofelia  
**Dshamilja Kaiser** *mez* ..... Gertrude  
**Gianluca Buratto** *bass* ..... Ghost/Priest  
**Prague Philharmonic Choir; Vienna Symphony Orchestra / Paolo Carignani**

Stage director **Olivier Tambosi**

Video director **Felix Breisach**

C Major Entertainment © 2 DVD 740608;

© 740704 (145' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.0, DTS5.0 & PCM stereo • O • s)

Recorded live at the Bregenz Festival, July 18, 2016

Includes synopsis



All the world's a stage.  
 It's from the wrong play,  
 but the Melancholy  
 Jaques's extended  
 metaphor in *As You Like*

*It could apply to Olivier Tambosi's staging of Hamlet for the Bregenz Festival with its theatre-within-a-theatre setting and choral courtiers clad in clownish wigs and ruffs. Pavel Černoch smears white stage make-up over his face, Pagliacci-style, as Hamlet prepares to snare Claudius. The play's the thing, but whose operatic Hamlet is this? It isn't Brett Dean's brand-new version which dazzled audiences at Glyndebourne this summer. Nor is it Ambroise Thomas's 1868 grand opéra which gets the occasional outing, especially if there's a star soprano available capable of tackling Ophélie's dizzying coloratura.*

Step forwards Franco Faccio (1840-91), Italian composer and conductor. Even more significantly, step forward his lifelong friend and collaborator Arrigo Boito as librettist. Boito, of course, went on to collaborate with Giuseppe Verdi on two great Shakespearean masterpieces, *Otello* and *Falstaff*; and although *Amleto* was from

much earlier – contemporary with Verdi's late middle period – it is an exceptional piece of work, filleting a lengthy play to fit a two and a half-hour Italian opera without losing substantial elements of the plot and retaining all the key characters. Boito's language is poetic, with plenty of floral references in Ophelia's mad scene and the ghost speaking in terza rima, a metre Dante employed in his *Divine Comedy*.

Faccio and Boito were both members of the Scapigliatura, a group of young radicals determined to shake up the Italian opera scene. So why is Faccio's *Amleto* virtually unknown? After its premiere in Genoa, Faccio revised it for La Scala in 1871, where he had been appointed music director. However, the tenor Mario Tiberini was ill, causing a postponement. When the opera did play in Milan, Tiberini was not sufficiently recovered, the performance flopped – the great Italian publisher Giulio Ricordi dismissed it as 'Hamlet without Hamlet' – and Faccio promptly withdrew the opera, never to allow a revival. He settled instead on life as a conductor, responsible for the premieres of *Aida*, the revised *Simon Boccanegra* and *Otello*.

Anthony Barrese of Opera Southwest (Albuquerque) made a performing edition from the autograph manuscript and a piano vocal score, the edition later used by the Bregenz Festival in 2016 for the European revival of Faccio's opera as part of its Shakespeare400 celebrations. Despite Faccio's Wagnerian inclinations, this is music very much in an Italian mould, with set piece arias and duets but also through-composed recitatives. Some passages could have spilled from the pen of Verdi himself, especially Ophelia's funeral march, which is wholly memorable.

Tambosi's production in the Bregenz Festspielhaus is simple but effective. Černoch's tortured Hamlet – dressed in plain black, emphasising his detachment from court life – acts and sings terrifically, including his great soliloquy 'Essere o non essere!' (To be or not to be), while the Romanian soprano Iulia Maria Dan is

an affecting Ophelia, wandering through waist-high greenery, plucking leaves in her mad scene to a swooning violin melody. The Ghost of Old Hamlet (the booming bass Gianluca Buratto) is dramatically silhouetted against bright back-lighting, there's a powerful prayer for Claudio Sgura's slippery Claudius and a dramatic Gertrude from mezzo Dshamilja Kaiser. Paul Schweinester's eloquent, curly-mopped Laertes contributes well to the dramatic final duel.

In short, *Amleto* is a very fine work indeed – superior to Thomas's *Hamlet* – and this Bregenz production constitutes a major operatic rediscovery. **Mark Pullinger**

## Lehár

### Der Graf von Luxemburg

**Daniel Behle** *ten* ..... René, Graf von Luxemburg  
**Camilla Nylund** *sop* ..... Angèle Didier  
**Louise Alder** *sop* ..... Juliette Vermont  
**Simon Bode** *ten* ..... Armand Brissard  
**Sebastian Geyer** *bar* ..... Prince Basil Basilowitsch  
**Margit Neubauer** *mez* ..... Countess Stasa Kokozow  
**Ludwig Mittelhammer** *bar* ..... Sergei Mentschikoff  
**Ingyu Hwang** *ten* ..... Pawel von Pawlowitsch  
**Gurgen Baveyan** *bar* ..... Pélégryn  
**Frankfurt Opera Chorus; Frankfurt Opera and Museum Orchestra / Eun Sun Kim**

Oehms © 2 OC968 (86' • DDD)

Recorded live, December 2015 - January 2016

Includes synopsis



'The trifle [*Der Schmarrn*] is ready, and you've only yourselves to blame

if it flops.' Lehár seems to have been positively flippant when he handed the newly completed score of *Der Graf von Luxemburg* over to the Theater an der Wien in 1909. But of course *Kaiserschmarrn*, when fresh, is about the most delicious treat Vienna has to offer. And *Der Graf von Luxemburg* is Lehár at his imperial height, post-*Merry Widow*, pre-Tauber: champagne operetta at its gorgeous, glittering best.



Daniel Behle is a graceful René and Camilla Nylund an engagingly nuanced Angèle in Lehár's *Der Graf von Luxemburg*

We're in Paris, and opera star Angèle Didier needs an aristocratic title so she can marry the Russian millionaire Prince Basil. Count René of Luxembourg has a title but no money: problem solved – well, almost. An incognito marriage, a lost glove and the fragrance of Angèle's perfume all play a part in the ensuing romantic complications, and Lehár responds with a score which some might argue surpasses even the *Widow* for sheer melodic richness.

Complete recordings (as against highlights discs) have been fairly rare, and while you won't want to replace your Gedda/Popp set under Willy Mattes just yet, this spirited new version is extremely welcome. Taken from performances at the Frankfurt Opera, it's got the immediacy and momentum of a live occasion. And, most importantly, everyone sounds like they're loving it, starting with the conductor Eun Sun Kim, who never wallows, even in numbers as seductive as the waltz song 'Bist du's lachendes glück'. She enjoys all the orchestral details: the woodwind players in Angèle's big Act 2 opening aria really sound as if they're part of the musical conversation.

Camilla Nylund is an engagingly nuanced Angèle, hitting her high notes in grand style but with a plangent, more

shaded tone in intimate passages. Daniel Behle is a graceful René (listen to the easy, weightless lilt as he pushes off into 'Trèfle incarnat'); and Louise Alder and Simon Bode strike sparks off each other as the young bohemians Juliette and Brissard (Alder, in particular, makes a brilliant foil to Sebastian Geyer's gruff Basil). The only serious disappointment is Margit Neubauer speaking, rather than singing, the cameo role of Basil's old flame Countess Kokozow.

All in all, though, it easily outclasses its closest modern rival: Daniel Inbal's rather cooler account on CPO, which tinkers with the order of individual numbers and includes all the spoken dialogue (non-German speakers might not see that as an advantage). This new release gives you just the music, in the published order, and with performers who clearly enjoy both Lehár's escapism and his tenderness. If only the presentation was better! There's a perfunctory, pretentious booklet note but no text or translations. These artists treat *Der Graf von Luxemburg* like the jewel it is: why can't the label follow suit?

**Richard Bratby**

*Selected comparisons:*

Mattes (EMI/WARN) 2564 61270-3

D Inbal (CPO) CPO777 788-2

## Mozart

### *Il sogno di Scipione*

**Stuart Jackson** *ten* ..... Scipione  
**Klara Ek** *sop* ..... Costanza  
**Soraya Mafi** *sop* ..... Fortuna  
**Krystian Adam** *ten* ..... Publio  
**Robert Murray** *ten* ..... Emilio  
**Chiara Skerath** *sop* ..... Licenza  
**Choir and Orchestra of Classical Opera / Ian Page**  
 Signum ® ② SIGCD499 (108' • DDD)  
 Includes synopsis, libretto and translation



Like Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, 'Scipio's Dream' is an *azione teatrale*. The

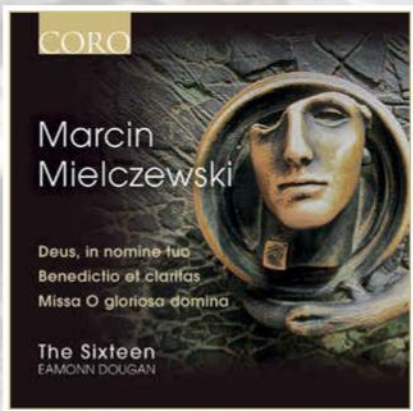
circumstances of the work's composition and performance are not entirely clear. It seems that Mozart wrote it in honour of the Archbishop of Salzburg, Sigismund Schrattenbach, who died before it could be performed. It was then brought out (with a simple change of name in the final recitative) for Hieronymus, Count Colloredo, who was later to cause Mozart so much grief; it may have been performed as part of the celebrations marking Colloredo's entry into Salzburg in April 1772.

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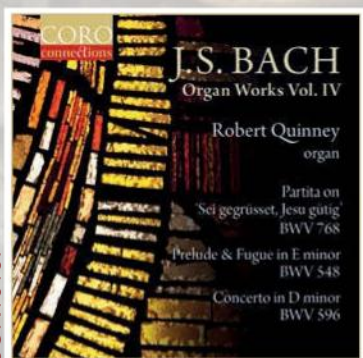
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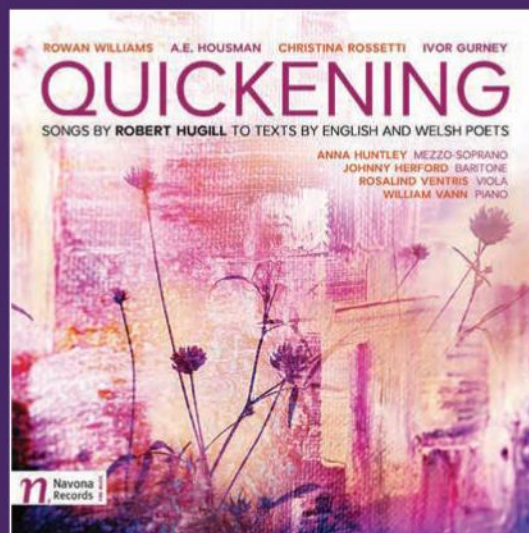
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The libretto was an old one by Metastasio, first set in 1735, whose sources were Cicero and Silius Italicus. In a dream, Scipio Africanus the Younger is visited by Fortune and Constancy, who require him to choose between them. He finds himself in the heavens, where he meets his father Emilio and his adoptive father Publio. He would like to remain with them but that is not allowed, as he still has great deeds to accomplish. Publio and Emilio refuse to advise him. In the end, Scipio plumps for Constancy; Fortune threatens him with disaster, but he awakes safely back on Earth. In the closing 'Licenza' a singer sycophantically addresses the archbishop: the subject is not Scipio but Hieronymus himself.

Metastasio's libretto includes several of his trademark metaphor arias. Mozart's setting – a string of recitatives and arias, with one accompanied recitative near the end – is leisurely, with long orchestral introductions and florid vocal writing. The exception, Publio's 'Quercia annosa', provides telling relief; but, to be fair, the 15-year-old Mozart showed good dramatic sense by abridging the *da capo* repeats.

The Orchestra of Classical Opera, playing on period instruments about a semitone below today's pitch, are quite wonderful: a special bouquet to Gavin Edwards and Nick Benz, whose B flat alto horns take them into the stratosphere. The singers, most of them new to me, are just as fine. Stuart Jackson manages the melismas and wide leaps of his two arias with confidence and elegance; his fellow tenors, Krystian Adam and Robert Murray, likewise display an exemplary stylishness. Constancy's first aria and Fortune's second are bland and pretty well interchangeable: Soraya Mafi gets more out of Fortune's vigorous 'Liebe sono', while Klara Ek seals Constancy's triumph with a brilliant account of 'Bianchiaggia in mar lo scoglio', the kind of heroic aria that da Ponte parodied in *Così fan tutte*. Mozart wrote two versions of the 'Licenza' aria: Chiara Skerath sings them both, beautifully.

Ian Page presides over a charming performance, with well-paced recitatives and appropriate, sometimes extravagant decoration. This is minor Mozart, done supremely well. **Richard Lawrence**

## Rossini



### Guillaume Tell

**Gerald Finley** *bar* ..... Guillaume Tell  
**Malin Byström** *sop* ..... Mathilde  
**John Osborn** *ten* ..... Arnold  
**Eric Halfvarson** *bass* ..... Melcthal  
**Sofia Fomina** *sop* ..... Jemmy  
**Enkelejda Shkosa** *mez* ..... Hedwige  
**Nicolas Courjal** *bass* ..... Gesler

### Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden / Sir Antonio Pappano

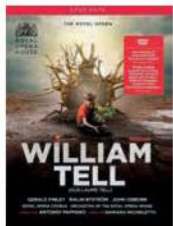
Stage director **Damiano Michieletto**

Video director **Jonathan Haswell**

Opus Arte (F) (2) DVD OA1205D; (F) OABD7195D  
 (3h 21' + 15' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080p • DTS-HD MA5.1,  
 DTS5.1 & LPCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, July 5, 2015

Includes synopsis



It was the gratuitous rape of a young woman by officers answerable to their Austrian Gauleiter during the Act 3 Pas de soldats of Damiano Michieletto's Covent Garden staging of Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* that caused the production to be jeered to the echo on its first night in June 2015; though, as others noted at the time, it was the virtual rape of the opera itself that was the greater offence. Ill-informed as to the nature of Schiller's and Rossini's subject and further undermined by the banal ideas dreamed up to take its place, this was director's opera at its most dire.

The DVD derives from the third performance, by which time the offending scene had been reduced to little more than a badly staged group fumble. Not that things were much modified elsewhere. Watching people stripping or being stripped (including, bizarrely, young children being stripped to their underwear during the 'bath-time' sequence which Michieletto adds to Hedwige's Act 4 Prayer) was another of the production's stranger preoccupations.

One can only assume that stage designer Paolo Fantin was at one with his long-term collaborator in reducing the carefully judged pastoral picturesque of Rossini's Act 1 to a neon-lit white box with tables, chairs and a token sapling (potted). The designs for the second and third acts are better conceived, though anyone hoping that close-up filming might reveal subtleties in the acting not evident in the theatre will be disappointed. Close-ups add to the embarrassment.

The Royal Opera production fielded a distinguished roster of *comprimario* players but the principals are the same as on Pappano's textually incomplete live 2010 Rome concert recording (Warner Classics, 10/11). John Osborn, a fine Arnold in concert, seems out of sorts here in his big Act 4 scene, while the Tell, Gerald Finley, and the Mathilde, Malin Byström, are even more obviously out of their depth in the theatre than on record. Pappano conducts with greater grip and insight than in the

2010 recording. As for the text, Hedwige's Prayer has been restored but the lovely Act 4 trio has not.

The DVD alternative, Graham Vick's 2013 Pesaro Festival staging conducted by Michele Mariotti, is not without problems of its own, not least Vick's decision to stand the opera's politics on their head by portraying the Swiss patriots as Soviet freedom fighters. That said, his production has a trio of plausible leads – Nicola Alaimo as a vocally robust Tell, a decent Matilde, and Juan Diego Flórez, no less, as Arnold – and the text is played complete.

Indeed, it's here in the hearth-and-home intimacy of the important familial scenes that Vick's direction comes fully into its own, not least in his theatrically effective reimagining of the role of Tell's son, Jemmy. But, then, however you view Vick's political take on the piece, his directorial craft is in a different league from that of the hapless Michieletto. **Richard Osborne**

Selected comparison:

Mariotti (7/15) (DECC) DVD 074 3870DH2;

D 074 3871DH

## R Strauss



### Elektra

**Birgit Nilsson** *sop* ..... Elektra  
**Regina Resnik** *mez* ..... Klytemnestra  
**Marie Collier** *sop* ..... Chrysothemis  
**Gerhard Stolze** *ten* ..... Aegisthus  
**Tom Krause** *bass-bar* ..... Orestes  
**Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Sir Georg Solti**  
 Decca (M) (3) (2 + 2) 483 1494DHO3  
 (108' • DDD • Dolby True-HD & LPCM stereo)  
 Recorded 1967. From Decca SET354-5 (11/67)  
 Includes synopsis, libretto and translation

## R Strauss



### Salome

**Birgit Nilsson** *sop* ..... Salome  
**Eberhard Wächter** *bar* ..... Jokanaan  
**Gerhard Stolze** *ten* ..... Herod  
**Grace Hoffman** *mez* ..... Herodias  
**Waldemar Kmentt** *ten* ..... Narraboth  
**Josephine Veasey** *mez* ..... Page  
**Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Sir Georg Solti**  
 Decca (M) (3) (2 + 2) 483 1498DHO3  
 (99' • DDD • Dolby True-HD & LPCM stereo)  
 Recorded 1961. From Decca SET228-9 (3/62)  
 Includes synopsis, libretto and translation



Products of the heyday of the early stereo era, Solti's recordings of Strauss's two 'stage tone poems', as Norman Del Mar dubbed them, have rarely been out of the

catalogue. Now they join a recent clutch of operatic reissues from Decca housing both CDs and Blu-ray audio in the same handsome hardback booklet.

The *Salome* dates from 1961, the *Elektra* from 1967 (although was it really on just two separate days, as Decca's booklet says?), so from the periods directly preceding and following the sessions for the three *Ring* operas on which Birgit Nilsson sang Brünnhilde for Solti and producer John Culshaw. The great Swede stares out from the covers of both, doing her best crazed Salome look for one, embodying a thoughtful, pained Elektra for the other. Culshaw's fingerprints can be detected as soon as you start listening – in the still striking scope of the 'sonicstage' recording and the penchant for special effects.

The Blu-ray audio format is far from ideal, requiring that a Blu-ray player of decent quality be hooked up to one's hi-fi – and it's a shame, as I've said before, that Decca don't offer downloads of the remastered 24-bit 96kHz files as well. If you've got the hardware, though, the results are mightily impressive, with both scores coming across with an astonishing level of detail and clarity. You can hear every little jittery tremolo, every note of shimmering flutter-tongue, glistening glockenspiel or nervous peck of a harp. Rarely before has one been able to hear quite how outstanding the Vienna Philharmonic's playing is on both sets, and the sound of the orchestra in tidied-up, hi-res glory is magnificent.

With the *Salome*, Solti drives the orchestra hard. They keep up, but often at the expense of the score's luxuriousness and colour. And although the conductor's account of Salome's Dance is surely one of the most viscerally exciting on record, one often gets the sense that both he and Culshaw did indeed view this score primarily as a tone poem: orchestra and conductor plough on, with singers forced to hold on. It's an impression that's exacerbated by a balance in which the orchestra is placed forward, the voices somewhat behind, and not always easy to pin down within Culshaw's sonicstage.

None of this helps Nilsson's Salome. She sings impressively, as one would expect, but often struggles in the circumstances to get the words across and therefore offers only an incomplete picture of the character. Eberhard Wächter's Jokanaan, meanwhile, is rather small-scale, and struggles to assert himself amid so much orchestral hubbub – the conversation between him and Salome ahead of the curse strikes me as especially rushed. Gerhard Stolze – the only

performer, along with Nilsson, to sing a principal role in both sets – stands out in the supporting cast as a brilliantly pointed and vivid Herod.

Elektra, of course, is one of the roles for which Nilsson was most famous, and you can hear why right from the opening monologue here. Her tirelessness, musicality and trademark laser-like tone mark out a formidable performance – the first on record, of course, to be presented uncut. Listening on Blu-ray audio, moreover, one hears afresh how carefully this recording is balanced, how Solti's conducting – which had struck me as unsubtle and loud when listening to the recording previously – is actually carefully gauged and balanced much of the time. There are still passages where he seems to stick his head down into the score, especially those that are normally cut, and the excitement he whips up usually seems of a brittle, febrile sort, the sensuality skin-deep. But there's no doubting the care that he takes with the orchestra or the virtuosity with which they respond.

Culshaw's special effects are rather more controversial in *Elektra*, and neither they, nor some untidy edits, are helped much by the scrutiny afforded by the new format. Offstage voices sound artificial, while the various screams and laughs that bounce around – especially near the false revelation of Orestes' death – are well-meaning but, to modern ears, preposterous. Full marks to Regina Resnik (larger than life as Klytemnestra) and Marie Collier (rather wobbly and wan as Chrysothemis) for commitment in that regard, though. Again, they were rather let down in the bass-baritone department (was there such a shortage in Vienna at the time?): Tom Krause, First Nazarene on the *Salome*, makes a decent but hardly compelling Orestes.

Neither of these sets would be a first choice for these operas these days. However, with one of the greatest LP-era Wagnerians in the title-roles, and often stunningly vivid playing from the Vienna Philharmonic under Solti, they remain landmark recordings. And if you think you already know them, give them a go on Blu-ray audio format – they can still offer revelations. **Hugo Shirley**

## Verdi

### Don Carlo

**José Bros** *ten* ..... Don Carlo  
**Serena Farnocchia** *sop* ..... Elisabetta di Valois  
**Vladimir Stoyanov** *bar* ..... Rodrigo, Marquis of Posa  
**Marianne Cornetti** *mez* ..... Princess Eboli  
**Michele Pertusi** *bass-bar* ..... Philip II  
**Ievgen Orlov** *bass* ..... Grand Inquisitor

**Simon Lim** *bass* ..... Monk  
**Lavinia Bini** *sop* ..... Tebaldo  
**Marina Bucciarelli** *sop* ..... Voice from Heaven  
**Gregory Bonfatti** *ten* ..... Count of Lerma/Herald  
**Chorus of the Teatro Regio, Parma; Arturo Toscanini Philharmonic Orchestra / Daniel Oren**  
*Stage director* **Cesare Lievi**  
*Video director* **Tiziano Mancini**  
 Dynamic **Ⓜ** ③ CDS7776; **Ⓜ** ② **DVD** 37776;  
**Ⓜ** **Ⓜ** 57776 (3h 2' • DDD • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •  
 DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)  
 Recorded live, October 2016  
 Includes synopsis

## Verdi

### Il trovatore

**Anna Pirozzi** *sop* ..... Leonora  
**Piero Pretti** *ten* ..... Manrico  
**Marco Caria** *bar* ..... Count di Luna  
**Enkelejda Shkosa** *mez* ..... Azucena  
**Vincenzo Bellini Lyric Chorus, Marchigiano; Fondazione Orchestra Regionale delle Marche / Daniel Oren**  
*Stage director* **Francisco Negrin**  
*Video director* **Tiziano Mancini**  
 Dynamic **Ⓜ** ② CDS7769; **Ⓜ** **DVD** 37769;  
**Ⓜ** **Ⓜ** 57769 (129' • DDD • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •  
 DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)  
 Recorded live at the Arena Sferisterio, Macerata, Italy, July/August 2016  
 Includes synopsis



These DVDs (available also on Blu-ray and audio-only CD) give us two comparable Verdi productions from two very different Italian festivals. Macerata stages its shows on the broad, shallow stage of the town's open-air Sferisterio. The Verdi Festival in Parma, by contrast, has to squeeze the action (and in *Don Carlo* there's no shortage of it) on to the relatively modest stage of the 1400-seat Teatro Regio.

Both shows feature Daniel Oren as conductor, a maestro who knows how each of the scores goes but doesn't offer much else besides. He captures little of the driving rhythmic urgency that courses through *Il trovatore*'s veins and misses *Don Carlo*'s brooding grandeur. The orchestral playing in both performances is pretty rustic (a fine cello solo for Philip's 'Ella gammai m'amò' notwithstanding), and pit-stage coordination cannot always be relied upon. The singing from the chorus in Macerata can waver tuning-wise; in Parma there just doesn't seem to be enough of them.



Birgit Nilsson, Georg Solti and John Culshaw collaborated on Strauss's *Elektra* and *Salome* in the 1960s, either side of setting down their landmark Ring cycle

These are solid performances, though, and the *Don Carlo* in particular offers encouraging signs that the Parma festival, which seemed to be in trouble a few years ago, might be back on an even keel. Cesare Lievi's production charts a sensible course between period costumes and minimalist (and no doubt budget-conscious) sets. But while, for example, an oversize tomb for Carlo V, adorned with a wreath the size of a tractor tyre, does what it can to look imposing, there's no getting away from the fact that this theatre's stage really isn't big enough to do this *grand opéra* justice.

The cast is led by a bright, tireless Don Carlo from José Bros, though one wishes he would vary his volume a little more often. He sings beautifully on the few occasions when he goes below *forte*, such as in his final duet with Serena Farnocchia's authentically Italianate, touching Elisabeth. Michele Pertusi's voice lies too high for Philip but he sings with authority, and Vladimir Stoyanov is a stylish Posa. Marianne Cornetti gives us an imposing, powerfully sung Eboli.

Francisco Negrin's *Trovatore* is a more abstract affair conceived for a less conventional space, but it still feels essentially traditional. There are extras aplenty (including a lightly sung young

boy at Azucena's side), a chorus in threatening face paint, imaginative lighting and even some impressive pyrotechnics – although one struggles to keep track of the details on the small screen.

The direction of the singers is pretty rudimentary but Anna Pirozzi gives us a grandly sung Leonore (a role she has tackled at Covent Garden), which is matched by Piero Pretti's robust Manrico. Marco Caria (Conte di Luna) is, alas, no stylist, but Enkelejda Skhosa brings plenty of voice and personality to Azucena.

The sound-only versions are non-starters, I'd say; but while there are more universally recommendable versions of both operas available on film – Luc Bondy's French *Don Carlos* conducted by Antonio Pappano (Warner Classics, 4/01), or Karajan's old-fashioned but gloriously sung Vienna *Trovatore*, recently reissued on Arthaus, 9/17) – both these releases represent respectable achievements.

Hugo Shirley

### 'Espoir'

**Auber** Le lac des fées – Ils s'éloignent! Je reste  
**Berlioz** Benvenuto Cellini – Seul pour lutter  
**Donizetti** Dom Sébastien – Seul sur la terre.  
 La favorite – La maîtresse du Roi. Lucia di Lammermoor – Tombe degli avi miei.

Rosmonda d'Inghilterra – Dopo i lauri di vittoria  
**Halévy** Guido et Ginévro – Dans ces lieux;  
 Tu seras donc pour moi<sup>9</sup>. La reine de Chypre –  
 De mes aïeux ombres sacrées **Rossini** Otello –  
 Venise, ô ma patrie **Verdi** Jerusalem – L'infamie!  
 prenez ma vie!

**Michael Spyres** *ten* <sup>9</sup>**Joyce El-Khoury** *sop*

**Hallé Orchestra / Carlo Rizzi**

Opera Rara © ORR251 (78' • DDD • T/t)

### 'Écho'

**Berlioz** Benvenuto Cellini – Les belles fleurs  
**Donizetti** Lucia di Lammermoor – Lucia,  
 perdona ...<sup>9</sup>; Regnava nel silenzio **Halévy** La Juive –  
 Assez longtemps la crainte et la tristesse **Hérold**  
 Le pré aux clercs – Jours de mon enfance  
**Meyerbeer** Robert le diable – Robert, toi que  
 j'aime; Quand je quittai la Normandie; Va, dit-elle,  
 va, mon enfant **Rossini** Guillaume Tell – Ils  
 s'éloignent enfin **Weber/Berlioz** Le Freyschütz –  
 Hélas! sans le revoir

**Joyce El-Khoury** *sop* <sup>9</sup>**Michael Spyres** *ten*

**Hallé Orchestra / Carlo Rizzi**

Opera Rara © ORR252 (79' • DDD • T/t)



With these two discs Opera Rara moves away from its predominantly Italian repertoire into territory occupied by the Palazzetto Bru Zane and its excellent CD-cum-book series of lesser-known 19th-century French operas. Julie Dorus-Gras (1805-96) and Gilbert Duprez (1806-96) starred in the premieres of two operas featured here, *Guido et Ginévra* and *Benvenuto Cellini*, and one that isn't, Donizetti's *Les martyrs*. Dorus-Gras appeared in the premieres of *Robert le diable* and *La Juive*; Duprez in *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Jérusalem* and many others. Joyce El-Khoury and Michael Spyres perform arias associated with their respective forebears and – a nice touch – each sings in a duet on the other's recording.

The booklets include a background article on the original singers, an introduction to each item, and full texts and translations. Rosie Ward quotes Berlioz's praise of Duprez's 'chest voice ... with ... a beauty of sound for which nothing had prepared us'. She doesn't quote Rossini's comment that Duprez's top C, the famous *ut de poitrine*, sounded like the squawk of a capon having its throat cut. Nothing of the sort can be levelled at Michael Spyres, who delivers Cs, Ds and, in *Le lac des fées*, an astonishing top E flat with overwhelming power and confidence. He begins with the French version of Othello's 'Ah! si, per voi già sento': if this is indeed Othello's first utterance, it makes for a more commanding entrance than the recitative that precedes it in the original. Equally martial, with similar dotted rhythms, is the aria from *Rosmonda*.

With Halévy's *Guido et Ginévra* we are on really unfamiliar ground. Like Romeo, Guido mourns at his beloved's tomb (and, like Juliet, Ginévra is not really dead). His air begins with a mournful trumpet solo in B flat minor and ends surprisingly in B major. The duet from the following act is powerfully dramatic. Spyres is magnificent throughout the disc, lacking only the honeyed tone of Nicolai Gedda where Benvenuto Cellini yearns for the life of a shepherd leading his herd (*sic!*) to pasture. It's curious that *Lucie de Lammermoor* doesn't get a look-in, as Duprez certainly sang his part in French as well as Italian.

Like Dorus-Gras, Joyce El-Khoury takes the part of both Isabelle and Alice in *Robert le diable*. She is particularly suited to the gentle Alice, whose 'Va, dit-elle' anticipates Micaëla's 'Et tu lui diras' in

*Carmen* by more than 40 years. Mathilde's air from *Guillaume Tell* is just as simple and unaffected. El-Khoury catches Agathe's tenderness in 'Ma prière' ('Leise, leise') from *Le Freyschütz* and phrases 'I miei sospiri' in *Lucia* to perfection (not quite matched by Spyres). Sometimes she sacrifices her consonants to beauty of tone: not too serious a drawback. Carlo Rizzi and the Hallé provide lively accompaniments, with some fine solos. Both discs are a must for lovers of the repertoire. **Richard Lawrence**

## 'Eternamente'

**Boito** Mefistofele - Spunta l'aurora pallida<sup>a</sup>

**Donaudy** O del mio amato ben **Giordano**

Andrea Chénier - Vicino a te s'acqueta<sup>b</sup>. Siberia -

No! se un pensiero torture **Leoncavallo**

La bohème - Ed ora conoscetela. Zingari -

La canzone di Fleana **Mascagni** Cavalleria

rusticana - Regina coeli<sup>c</sup>; Tu qui, Santuzza<sup>d</sup>; Voi

lo sapete o Mamma **Mascheroni** Eternamente

**Ponchielli** La Gioconda - Suicidio **Puccini**

La rondine - Parigi. Tosca - Vissi d'arte **Refice**

Ombra di Nube

**Angela Gheorghiu** soprano with

<sup>abd</sup> **Joseph Calleja** ten <sup>c</sup> **Richard Novak** bass

<sup>a</sup> **Prague Philharmonic Choir; Prague**

**Philharmonia / Emmanuel Villaume** <sup>bspr</sup>

Warner Classics © 9029 57802-4 (60' • DDD • T/t)



'I want to be remembered eternally through my voice', Angela

Gheorghiu remarks in the publicity material for her first studio recording in six years. Compared with the singers who had the misfortune to be born before the invention of the gramophone (or the first edition of *Gramophone*), she is naturally advantaged. The Romanian singer also has a penetrating, dark-coloured soprano: once heard – and for many in the UK the first experience was that 1994 Covent Garden *Traviata* – it is not easily forgotten.

Immortality, however, may depend on more imagination, more effort – more art and less artfulness. 'Eternamente', recorded with indifferent accompaniment from the Prague Philharmonia under Emmanuel Villaume, is an unfocused snapshot of a maturing soprano's voice as Gheorghiu – sort of – transitions from lighter repertoire, exploring Italian opera and song from the composers who followed Verdi but without finding a sweet spot.

Stepping up in dramatic heft but down in tessitura, she begins with bleeding chunks of *Cavalleria rusticana*, her Santuzza

paired with Joseph Calleja's impassive Turiddu. She presents a more vulnerable, less battleaxe-like heroine than some of the earthier mezzos who have taken the role, but her quivery 'Regina coeli' underwhelms and a persistent beat at both ends of her range is troubling. Where she should scorch Turiddu with her anger and shame, she merely administers a light rap on the knuckles.

This is the weakest section of the album but unfortunately it sets the tone, and persistent vocal niggles are troubling. A revisit of 'Vissi d'arte' exposes more frail top notes. Another duet with Calleja, 'Spunta l'aurora pallida' from Boito's *Mefistofele*, is marred by intonation issues and an admittedly brief but nonetheless embarrassing contribution from the bass Richard Novak. She and Calleja at last create some chemistry in the final duet from *Andrea Chénier*, which has more flair and commitment all round. A trio of rarities from Giordano and Leoncavallo are decently sung but Gheorghiu doesn't give them individual enough attention to suggest that they are hidden gems you'll want to come back to.

The bonbons provide overall greater satisfaction. The title-track by Angelo Mascheroni was a hit for Caruso; it suits Gheorghiu's aptitude for dreamy reverie and lyrical sentiment. This and Licio Refice's 'Ombra di Nube' – and even the so-called *arie antiche* from which Gheorghiu chooses Donaudy's 'O del mio amato ben' – are not so much successors to the 19th-century opera tradition as the harbingers of pop and film music, and while they are undoubtedly gooey, Gheorghiu digs in with a long spoon. Eternamente? Perhaps it will suit for Christmas. **Neil Fisher**

## 'L'Opéra'

**Berlioz** La damnation de Faust, Op 24 - Merci, doux crépuscule! Les Troyens - Inutiles regrets ... En un dernier naufrage **Bizet** Carmen - La fleur que tu m'avais jetée. Les pêcheurs de perles - Au fond du temple saint<sup>c</sup>; C'est toi, toi qu'enfin je revois **Gounod** Roméo et Juliette - L'amour, l'amour ... Ah, lève-toi soleil **Halévy** La Juive - Rachel, quand du Seigneur **Lalo** Le roi d'Ys - Puisqu'on ne peut fléchir; Vainement, ma bien-aimée **Massenet** Le Cid - Ah! Tout est bien fini ... O souverain. Manon<sup>b</sup> - Enfin Manon, nous voilà enfin seuls ensemble ... En fermant les yeux; Toi! Vous! Oui! Je fus cruelle ... N'est-ce plus ma main. Werther - Traduire! Ah! Bien souvent mon rêve s'envole ... Pourquoi me réveiller **Meyerbeer** L'Africaine - Pays merveilleux ... Ô paradis **Offenbach** Les contes d'Hoffmann - O Dieu, de quelle ivresse **Thomas Mignou** - Elle ne croyait pas, dans sa candeur naïve



Michael Spyres delivers high notes with overwhelming power and confidence

**Jonas Kaufmann** *ten* with <sup>b</sup>**Sonya Yoncheva** *sop*

<sup>a</sup>**Ludovic Tézier** *bar* **Bavarian State Orchestra / Bertrand de Billy**

Sony Classical © 88985 39076-2 (74' • DDD • T/I)

Also available as Deluxe Version © 88985 39083-2 and Vinyl Edition © ② ● 88985 39076-1



A dapper Jonas Kaufmann smoulders in the auditorium of the exquisite Palais

Garnier, beneath Marc Chagall's celebrated ceiling paintings, on the cover of his latest disc, 'L'Opéra'. Kaufmann has always been rather good in French repertoire. His second role at Covent Garden was a gripping Don José and his Werther and Faust for the Metropolitan Opera, beamed into cinemas around the globe, were both very fine. Indeed, with his slightly covered tone, I tend to prefer him in French rather than Italian roles. However, this new disc proves a mild disappointment.

The selection offers a personal journey from Kaufmann's early repertoire to recent triumphs, including a couple of

roles that he cancelled and has yet to perform on stage. The aria from Lalo's *Le roi d'Ys* was his first French rep, while he sang Wilhelm Meister (in Ambroise Thomas's *Mignon*) in Toulouse back in 2001 and Berlioz's Faust is a memento of his first collaboration with Antonio Pappano (at La Monnaie in 2002). You can't imagine he'll sing such roles again – they're a bit small fry now for the star tenor. Meatier fare comes via Werther's tortured 'Pourquoi me réveiller', Don José's Flower Song and Énée's 'Inutiles regrets' from *Les Troyens*.

Kaufmann's tenor is duskily beautiful, his dynamic control exceptional, but too much of the singing here relies on velvety *mezza voce* cruise control. The *pianissimo* B flat at the climax of 'La fleur que tu m'avais jetée' is almost comically crooned. In the magical opening section of Vasco da Gama's 'Ô paradis' from *L'Africaine* you can practically hear Kaufmann placing each note just as if gingerly setting porcelain figures down on a mantelpiece, although he rouses himself to passionate climaxes with ardour.

I detect little differentiation between characters, although admittedly many of the arias here are of the lovesick poet variety. There was much wailing and gnashing of teeth when Kaufmann withdrew from *Les Troyens* at Covent Garden. He makes a heroic sound but, listening to his tame account of 'Inutiles regrets', he probably made a wise decision.

Some of the finest singing on the disc comes in the duets. Kaufmann is joined by the classy French baritone Ludovic Tézier for the duet from *The Pearl Fishers*, their voices blending like coffee and cream, while Sonya Yoncheva is a delicious temptress in an excerpt from Massenet's *Manon*. Texts and translations are included, along with a sycophantic booklet interview by 'authorised biographer' Thomas Voigt. Bertrand de Billy and the orchestra of the Bayerisches Staatsoper offer dutiful support. One to delight the fans.

Mark Pullinger

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The Editors of Gramophone's sister music magazines, Jazzwise and Songlines, recommend some of their favourite recordings from the past month

# Jazz

Brought to you by **jazzwise**

## Tim Berne's Snakeoil

Incidentals

ECM © 576 7257



The progressive alto saxophonist-composer Tim Berne's Snakeoil's fourth CD for the ECM label is the follow-up to

2015's *You've Been Watching Me* which saw Berne expand the current personnel to include guitarist Ryan Ferreira. That was a smart move: as with the more trenchant axeman Marc Ducret's interventions in Berne's music, Ferreira adds value. His rugged electric textures and eerily cinematic ambience (David Torn steps in on two tracks with more emphasis on the latter) is a positive addition to Berne's densely whirling collective soundworld, which nonetheless somehow retains the deep sonic space we expect to hear on an

ECM production. On *Incidentals* Berne further develops an episodic compositional structure for pieces that are boiling over with tension. Negotiating between experimental downtown street-fighting improv and avant-garde chamber music, there can't be too many others blurring the line between composed and unwritten music quite as vigorously as Snakeoil right now. **Selwyn Harris**

## Tyshawn Sorey

Verisimilitude

PI Recordings © P170



Tyshawn Sorey is about to replace Anthony Braxton as Professor of Music at Wesleyan University and his music occupies a not dissimilar frame of reference, rooted equally in African-American theories of

improvisation and experimental modern composition: Cage, Feldman and Xenakis in particular. The genius of Sorey's compositions – and five original pieces are documented here – is his uncanny ability to harness the energy of jazz-based improvisation while erasing any obvious stylistic hooks. The album opens with the freefalling 'Cascade in Slow Motion' which could, just about, pass for a distorted version of a jazz ballad, after which the music follows its own instincts exclusively. The second piece, 'Flowers For Prashant', turns out to be an extended unaccompanied solo by the ever-sensitive pianist Cory Smythe. Each piece segues into the next creating a monumental 80-minute flow and 'Obsidian' and 'Algid November' both meander with a purpose, slowly twisting around permutations of notes until hammered block chords on piano and a roaring tam-tam roll overwhelm the senses. **Philip Clark**

# World Music

Brought to you by **SONGLINES**

## Trio da Kali & Kronos Quartet

Ladilikan

World Circuit © WCD093



This album is a sublime meeting of two superb chamber groups. On the one hand there is San Francisco's string quartet

Kronos, who've been exploring music around the world for 40 years; on the other, the relatively young Trio da Kali, featuring top musicians on Mali's oldest instruments – the voice, the balafon (xylophone) and ngoni (lute). The opener 'Tita' has Trio da Kali taking the lead in a song of advice, with light quartet accompaniment until about three minutes in, when they respond with a great emotional outburst. In the upbeat 'Lila Bambo', the delicate counterpoint of balafon and strings is superb, thanks to arranger Jacob Garchik. The most arresting track is

'God Shall Wipe All Tears Away', a Mahalia Jackson song translated into Bamana, with the quartet imitating a church organ. With its bluesy balafon solos and powerful fusion of two great traditions – the Malian, dating back to the 13th century, the string quartet dating back to the 18th – this record shows just how innovative, meaningful and musically satisfying such meetings can be.

**Simon Broughton**

## Leveret

Inventions

RootBeat Records © RBRCD38



Their first two albums drew from the collections of Playford's *The English Dancing Master* and others, bringing dances and tunes from the pages of 17th-century sheet music that entranced audiences on

stage and record. Andy Cutting, Rob Harbron and Sam Sweeney – outstanding players of the melodeon, English concertina and fiddle, respectively – have changed their approach with their third studio album by penning their own tunes. Inventions is a natural progression from their previous work, but more symmetrical and systems-like in its structures: it is more contemporary new-build than 17th-century thatched cottage, which is interestingly reflected in the cover art. Their group mind is powerful, their superb ensemble playing interweaving with lovely melodic lines. And while composition is the basis, it's the air of exploration and improvisation that gives these tunes life. It's a chamber music that crosses between folk and contemporary classical. And if there's a more beautiful tune from a more prosaic source than Cutting's 'Ricer II' – dedicated to his potato ricer – I don't know of it. **Tim Cumming**

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# MUSICAL CONNECTIONS

Two listening journeys inspired by a couple of this month's feature articles

## Composer-pianists

Perhaps the ultimate composer-pianist on record is **Sergei Rachmaninov**, synonymous with a highly characterful and powerful musical personality. In his 1934 recording of *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* with Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, Rachmaninov's spellbinding virtuosity, sonorous *forte* chords and gossamer *pianissimos* shine through. It is also a window onto an older performance style. This month's cover artist, **Daniil Trifonov**, pays homage to Rachmaninov in his composition *Rachmaniana*. Recorded in 2015, it consists of five miniatures that form attractive characterisations in a light-touch but sincerely felt style. **Aaron Copland**'s recording of his Violin Sonata with violinist Louis Kaufman in 1944 clearly shows the sense of musical exchange Copland helps to create, showcasing the sonata's melting pot of Appalachian folksong and 'tonal' dissonance. Copland's clear attack fosters a beautiful, bell-like piano tone. **Federico Mompou**'s 1974 recording of his own *Paisajes* for solo piano perfectly captures the haunting, plaintive qualities of his compositional style. Our sense of time feels dilated, even in fast passages, the effect enhanced by the piano's tiny downward pitch bend on the note decay. Turning to the voice, we find **Benjamin Britten** at the piano in 1956 with the tenor Peter Pears recording his cycle *Winter Words*, a setting of Hardy's last published collection of poems. He is responsive at every moment to Pears's bright-timbred vocal line, and carries out his exacting tempo and articulation markings in a way that makes the whole seem effortlessly organic. So tightly woven into the spirit of the song is Britten's playing that you barely notice the sound quality of the piano as an instrument in itself. **Francis Poulenc**, recording in 1950, creates a wonderfully silky, luminous piano background accompanying Pierre Bernac in the cycle *Banalités*, on top of which Bernac plays characterfully with the French language. The piano line is played as an extension of the vocal line, mirroring its inflections and spurring Bernac on to the next phrase. Whether or not these represent 'authoritative' versions, the deep psychological insights afforded by a composer injecting performing vitality into his own creation prove endlessly fascinating. **Katie Gilbert**

**Rachmaninov** Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini Rachmaninov; Phil / Stokowski Naxos  
**Trifonov** Rachmaniana Trifonov DG  
**Copland** Violin Sonata Kaufman; Copland Soundmark  
**Mompou** Paisajes Mompou Ensayo  
**Britten** Winter Words Pears; Britten Decca  
**Poulenc** Banalités Bernac; Poulenc BNF Collection

Pianist-composers from Rachmaninov to Trifonov, via Britten, Mompou and others, provides the theme for a journey that embraces some unique music-making by its creators



Rachmaninov, a truly great composer and pianist

## Vocal constellations

Music for several voices has tended, historically speaking, to be designed more for the drawing room than the concert hall – modest works, often of a folksy, faux-naïve character, for amateurs to sing for the simple joy of singing. That hasn't, however, stopped some of the greatest singers turning their hand to such music. Brahms's *Liebeslieder-Walzer*, little gems, have attracted many starry quartets (plus starry pianists). The most touching recording is perhaps one of the earliest, with an astonishing line-up of **Irmgard Seefried**, **Kathleen Ferrier**, **Julius Patzak** and **Horst Günter**, recorded at the Edinburgh Festival in 1952 with Clifford Curzon and Hans Gál at the piano. The sound is imperfect, but the gentleness they bring to 'Zum Schluss' (actually from

Brahms's *Neue Liebeslieder-Walzer*) is irresistible. Another top-flight quartet to record those works was that consisting of **Edith Mathis**, **Brigitte Fassbaender**, **Peter Schreier** and **Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau**. They went further, though, recording a great deal more of the composer's often exquisite output for vocal ensemble. Among the gems they uncovered is the beautiful 'Der Abend'. Dvořák's charming Moravian duets offer gentle, highly melodic music for the same domestic market that Brahms had appealed to. Their character is captured beautifully in performances by **Genia Kühmeier** and **Bernarda Fink**, with Christoph Berner at the piano. **Natalie Dessay** and husband **Laurent Naouri** present something more like urban sophistication in Poulenc's only duet – though the voices are kept apart – his 'Colloque'. Finally, we turn to the lighter end of the spectrum. First is the delightfully spritely and witty 'The Girls' by the Swedish polymath Gunnar Wennerberg (1817-1907). It's sung here with a brilliant twinkle in the eye by **Elisabeth Söderström** and **Kerstin Meyer**, with Jan Eyron at the piano. I've avoided Rossini's spurious 'Cats' Duet', recorded by many a starry duo, despite the fact that it's unlikely to have been by Rossini at all. Instead, we finish with the delightful 'La regata veneziana' from *Soirées musicales*. Letting their hair down here with Gerald Moore at the piano are the sopranos **Elisabeth Schwarzkopf** and **Victoria de los**

**Angeles**, two of the greatest singers of the 20th century. It doesn't get much starrier than that! **Hugo Shirley**



To explore these playlists via a streaming service, or to create your own, we suggest qobuz.com. You can listen to these particular playlists at gramophone.co.uk/playlists

**Brahms** Liebeslieder-Walzer Seefried et al Decca  
**Brahms** Liebeslieder-Walzer Mathis et al DG  
**Dvořák** Moravian duets Kuhmeier et al HM  
**Poulenc** Colloque Dessay et al Erato  
**Wennerberg** The Girls Söderström et al BIS  
**Rossini** La regata veneziana Schwarzkopf et al Warner Classics

# REPLAY

**Rob Cowan's** monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings

## Chamber of delights

The Amadeus Quartet on vintage form in Romantic repertoire and a much-recorded Danish pianist

With a time frame that stretches from 1950 to 1969, Audité's fifth volume of **RIAS Amadeus Quartet Recordings** catches this great ensemble at the height of its powers. The theme on this occasion is Romanticism, and the set includes key repertoire that the quartet never took into the recording studio.

Of principal interest is Grieg's G minor Quartet (recorded 1953), a performance that for sheer energy and expressive power rivals the pre-war recording from the Budapest Quartet – the first movement especially. You get the sense that both the quartet's leader Norbert Brainin – who is on especially good form here – and his colleagues are relishing every moment of a delectable score.

Mendelssohn is represented by a fiery account (1952) of the *Capriccio* from Op 81 (a work the group did record complete), especially striking at its fugal centre; and the Quartet in E flat major, Op 12 (1969), which features a warmly phrased account of the opening *Adagio*.

Schumann is another curious absentee from the Amadeus's official discography, the Piano Quintet in E flat (1950) most engaging where in the first-movement exposition (played with repeat) the second theme is handed between the viola and the cello, whereas the Scherzo illustrates how well pianist Conrad Hansen establishes a strong presence without overwhelming his colleagues. How lovely, too, Brainin's playing in the Trio. Hansen also cues a gently rocking lullaby for the opening of Dvořák's Piano Quintet (1950), and all five players alternate poetry and high spirits for the Dumka second movement: note the wild *accelerando* from 7'24", before Hansen calls a halt and Brainin weeps his line with a mournful (though never overwrought) vibrato and marked portamentos. This is vintage Amadeus artistry.

It's interesting that for the opening bars of the third movement of Brahms's First Quartet (1950) they take the written

hairpin dynamic as a cue to enter on an aching *rallentando*, an option they also take on their two commercial recordings of the score, though here it's more marked. This darkly introspective reading is in marked contrast to the more songful, even genial, account from seven years later of Op 67, the finale's variations bringing the work to a colourful conclusion. The finale of the Op 111 String Quintet (1953, with Cecil Aronowitz), however, really fuels the flames, especially at its centre, though for sheer ebullience the opening can't compare with a roughly contemporaneous Sony recording from the Casals Festival at Prades with Isaac Stern, Alexander Schneider and friends (coupled with the Schumann Piano Quintet with Myra Hess), a classic that's surely due for a local reissue.

The other featured Brahms Quintets involve clarinettist Heinrich Geuser (1951), whose mellow playing fits the music's mood to perfection and Hansen (1950) whose contribution to the Piano Quintet, and the finale in particular, is powerfully communicative. Which leaves Bruckner's F major Quintet (1957), lovingly played from start to finish (movingly emotional in the *Adagio*) and Verdi's E minor Quartet (1962), not quite in the same class musically as the Bruckner but very well played.

So, in closing, I'd say that of the six volumes of this invaluable edition, perhaps Volume 5, 'Romanticism', is the most treasurable of all, given the number of Amadeus repertoire rarities it includes. The transfers, all from excellent mono radio tapes, are consistently excellent.

Staying with Austro-German Romanticism Danacord has treated us to a fresh and engaging 1955 account of Schubert's Piano Trio No 1, presented as part of a double-pack devoted to 'the most recorded Danish pianist in the first half of the 20th century' as annotator Claus Byrith describes Victor Schiøler. I was frequently reminded of the classic Cortot-Thibaud-Casals recording, principally because of the

lift that Schiøler and his excellent colleagues violinist Henry Holst and cellist Erling Blöndal Bengtsson bring to the outer movements. By contrast Bengtsson's solo at the start of the *Andante* second movement is more along the lines of Emanuel Feuermann, who years earlier had recorded the work with Heifetz and Rubinstein. Note also that Schiøler and Bengtsson playing the two Brahms sonatas is already available on Danacord (DACOCD738). Before Schubert makes his joyous entry Schiøler rounds off a memorable account of Beethoven's *Kreutzer* Sonata with Nielsen's son-in-law the Hungarian violinist Emil Telmányi (recorded 1942), whose memorable playing hails from another era, especially in the second movement where his fast trills and downward portamenti are strongly reminiscent of Bronisław Huberman.

Also included on this rewarding and generally well-transferred collection is a grand, sonorous stated Tchaikovsky First Piano Concerto (1950) commandingly accompanied by the Danish State Radio Symphony Orchestra under Erik Tuxen, and an account of Schumann's *Carnaval* that is by turns wistful and affecting. As for the three Intermezzi, Op 117, by Brahms, I can't recall ever hearing a more desolate reading of the third, an awe-inspiring eternity at seven minutes (broader than Radu Lupu by almost a minute). Mozart's C minor Fantasia K396 is also characterfully played.

### THE RECORDINGS



**RIAS Amadeus Quartet Recordings, Vol 5: Romanticism**

Audité 5 6  
AUDITE21 425



**The Great Danish Pianist Victor Schiøler, Vol 2**

Danacord M 2  
DACOCD781/2



Odessa-born pianist Ania Dorfmann's recordings for RCA have been gathered into a nine-disc box-set

## Ania Dorfmann revived

One of many pianists who have fallen between the cracks in terms of their reputations on disc is Ania Dorfmann (1899-1984), Odessa-born (a starting point she shared with an amazing array of great pianists) and who as a child accompanied the even younger Jascha Heifetz. Dorfmann also had the curious distinction of being the first female pianist conducted by Toscanini, most famously on a recording of Beethoven's First Piano Concerto, its inclusion here confirming recent memories of a performance that's often hard-driven and impatient, not a patch on the elegantly tooled stereo Andor Foldes version (under Ferdinand Leitner) that Eloquence has just reissued coupled with the *Emperor* Concerto (482 7048). Toscanini-lover that I am, I can't say I'm much taken with Dorfmann's blustery live account of the *Choral Fantasia* either, though this as far as I know is its first-ever RCA release, a pleasingly clean transfer of an exciting but flawed performance. No, don't dip your toe into the Dorfmann/Toscanini collaborations before you sample Dorfmann unaccompanied. And you can take my word for it that there's quality compensation in the various solo items, and never more than what's possibly the most sympathetically played complete set of Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words* ever recorded: whether reflective or flamboyant, Dorfmann focuses the poetic sentiment of these exquisite miniatures bringing them virtually (though not quite) on a par with Chopin's Mazurkas. Transfers are excellent and so are Jed Distler's notes.

## THE RECORDING



**Ania Dorfmann: The Complete RCA Album Collection**  
RCA © 8898 539010-2

## Vintage Jacques Jansen

Connoisseurs of vintage singing will almost certainly know the name Jacques Jansen, one of the finest French light baritones of the period, from the 1941 HMV recording of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* with Irène Joachim as Mélisande and Roger Désormière conducting. That same poignant phrasing and emotional engagement informs a programme of *mélodies* that opens with two sets of three songs by Debussy, *Trois ballades de François Villon* and, especially moving, *Le Promenoir des deux amants*, the first song 'Auprès de cette grotte sombre' ('Close to the dark grotto') setting words by the 17th-century poet Tristan L'Hermite, so lyrical and yet so utterly captivating in its sense of stillness. A Chabrier sequence finds us mostly among animals of sundry kinds, the 'Ballade des gros dindons' ('Ballad of the big fat turkeys') reminding us of Pierre Bernac in the same song while 'Villanelle des petits carnards' ('Villanelle of the little ducks') is likely to prove an earworm. But perhaps the highlight of the Chabrier selection is the composer's most celebrated song, 'L'île heureuse', evoking as it does a world filled with nostalgia and subtle sentiment and where, again, Jansen's performance is a fair match for Bernac's HMV 78 in terms of both word

painting and warmth of tone. An adorable collection, this, expertly transferred and with informed booklet notes by Tully Potter.

## THE RECORDING



**Jacques Jansen: The Decca Recitals**  
Decca Eloquence © 482 4603

## Celibidache in Munich

The once-healthy flood of Sergiu Celibidache CDs appears to have abated, at least for the time being, but one of note has recently surfaced, a Munich Philharmonic coupling of two major symphonies, Schubert's *Unfinished* (Gasteig, Munich, 1988) and Dvořák's *New World* (Herkulesaal, Munich, 1985). In the Schubert, Celibidache tellingly marks a contrast between the first movement's *Allegro moderato*, and the second's *Andante con moto*, the symphony's opening a hushed shimmer. The *New World* is something else again, the *Largo*, at 16'43", far broader than the norm though Bernstein's DG recording stretches to an epic 18'17". The principal contrast with Bernstein arrives with the *Scherzo*, who drives far harder though Celibidache's ability to summon sudden rainbows is evident from the second set (1'36") and, especially, the onset of the trio (3'21"), passages where his more relaxed approach pays off. As to the *Largo*, if you want to hear the prescribed quaver=52 Karel Ančerl's Vienna recording (due out soon on Eloquence) is a good place to start – his Czech Philharmonic recording is noticeably broader. Celibidache unfolds a veritable elegy though come the *Un poco più mosso* passage (led by flutes and oboes) where Dvořák ups the metronome, Celibidache stays put. Come the oboe's wake-up call at bar 90 (11'09") Celibidache makes sullen rhetoric of a passage that traditionally marks a complete change of mood. Still there's partial compensation in the finale, which near the end builds up a fair head of steam. Whether you stay with it up until that point will be down to personal taste. I did – and was glad I'd done so. ⑥

## THE RECORDING



**Dvořák** Symphony No 9  
**Schubert** Symphony No 8  
**Munich PO / Sergiu Celibidache**  
Münchner Philharmoniker ©  
MPHIL0004

# Books



## Malcolm Riley delves into the history of the Three Choirs Festival:

*'One of this book's strengths is the amount of colourful social history it contains, including the wayward eccentricities of several organists'*



## Mike Ashman reads Simon Callow's take on Wagner:

*'If you still think of Callow as the actor who created the role of Mozart in Peter Shaffer's Amadeus, you're not keeping up'*

### The Three Choirs Festival

#### A History

By Anthony Boden and Paul Hedley

Boydell Press, HB, 552pp, £25.00

ISBN 978-1-783-27209-9



What better way to celebrate such a resilient and quintessentially English musical institution

than by acquiring this comprehensive historical account of the Three Choirs Festival, possibly the world's oldest (almost continuous) music festival, which rotates annually between the cathedral cities of Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester.

First published in 1992, this new, revised edition weighs in at over 500 pages and includes 149 black-and-white illustrations. The reader's first port of call should be the excellent Appendix Timeline, although I must register a minor personal disappointment that my own small appearance in the 1985 Festival (in St Michael's, Tenbury Wells) does not feature! Trying to pinpoint exactly the date of the first 'Festival' has proved troublesome to several authors over many decades. Ivor Atkins reckoned that the annual 'gatherings' were established by 1715 and it is the 300th anniversary of this date that has prompted this new book.

From quite early on the meeting was intended to raise charitable funds for the widows and children of clergy in each respective diocese, with any losses guaranteed by a wealthy, musical local steward. Although the sacred music of Purcell and Handel formed the musical core of the liturgical services, as the 18th century progressed the festival's scope expanded to lengthy secular concerts (outside the cathedrals), with large audiences drawn in by the big-name singers of the day. These were the megastars of their time, and their eye-watering fees (particularly in the mid-19th century) compared starkly

with the pittance received by the lay clerks. Some things haven't changed!

Other late-summer inducements for the leisured classes included society balls, special lunches ('ordinaries') and race meetings. One of the great strengths of this book is the amount of colourful social history it contains. The various parochial machinations, intrigues and petty decanal rivalries which are related are worthy of Trollope, not to mention the wayward eccentricities of several of the incumbent organists, such as the great SS Wesley.

Naturally it was the great choral warhorses that drew in the crowds. *Elijah* was an annual fixture from 1840 until 1930, being routinely performed (along with *Messiah*) without rehearsal. Things nearly came a cropper in 1904 when the soprano soloist in *Elijah*, Luisa Sobrino, had partaken of too much alcoholic refreshment during the lunch break, and did not reappear for her part in the trio 'Lift thine eyes'. A 14-year-old Gloucester chorister, Ivor Gurney, came to the conductor Herbert Brewer's aid and saved the day.

There are countless accounts of woefully under-rehearsed concerts. The pressures on singers, players and conductors to plough through gargantuan programmes of (often) unfamiliar or new music would simply not be acceptable to today's artists. The roster of great composers who did take the plunge is impressive, from Sullivan and Parry to Coleridge-Taylor and Delius. Dvořák brought along his *Stabat mater*, Kodály the *Budavári Te Deum*, and there were dozens of important premieres from Dyson, Finzi, Howells et al. The greatest instrumentalists of the day also relished the festival ambience. There is a lovely tale of Fritz Kreisler's impromptu appearance in the back desks of the violins during a performance of Vaughan Williams's *Five Mystical Songs*, playing in a new string before tackling the Elgar Violin Concerto.

For many the festival's golden era came after the hiatus caused by the First World War with the influential triumvirate of Ivor Atkins, Percy Hull and Herbert Sumsion, aided and abetted by Elgar, the central,

dominating figure. There is the moving story of Elgar's contribution to Herbert Brewer's cantata *Emmaus* of 1901, its subsequent disappearance and neglect for 90 years and its rediscovery and revival by John Sanders in 1992. The liberalisation of liturgical constraints on programming is another recurring theme. It was Atkins who was instrumental in keeping Walton's *Belsazzar's Feast* at arm's length, with worries over the mention of eunuchs and concubines! It was only due to David Willcocks's persistence that the Worcester Chapter finally succumbed in 1957.

After the Second World War, other important festivals sprang up in Aldeburgh, Dartington and Edinburgh, and in 1960 the Southern Cathedrals Festival (Chichester, Salisbury and Winchester) was revived. With this in mind, it is interesting that Britten only conducted at the festival once, at Hereford in 1958.

Despite the book's length I should have liked to have heard what the festival experience was like for the hard-bitten orchestral players, and I wonder how much scope there was to have included a CD of recorded excerpts, starting with HMV's historic sides from the 1927 festival.

These tiny caveats apart, this handsome book will appeal particularly to British music enthusiasts. **Malcolm Riley**

### Being Wagner

#### The Triumph of the Will

By Simon Callow

William Collins, HB, 208pp, £14.99

ISBN 978-0-008-10569-3



It has been well, and recently, said that the story of Richard Wagner's life has been told so many times it can be told no

more. The advice was given in a tone of 'ignore this at your peril' and followed exasperation at a stream of biographically orientated books about the composer that paid relatively little attention to his work,

either written or musical. Simon Callow, in the wake of a stage show he wrote and starred in called *Inside Wagner's Head*, has decided to ignore it.

If you still think of Callow as 'just' the actor who created the role of Mozart in Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus* or the flamboyant partner who died a spectacular death in the movie *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, you're not keeping up. As a writer – apparently his first intended profession – he has completed more than 10 books. The now iconic *Being an Actor* was followed both by two others in which he also used the theatre and its practitioners to tell his own story and a biographical move towards other actors (Charles Laughton and Orson Welles) who fascinated him. What they have in common, apart from an easy page-turning readability, is much skill as an observer.

Callow sets his Wagner stall out early: '[the book] offers a sustained though not, of course, comprehensive examination of how this diminutive and often rebarbative man, with only the sketchiest of formal musical training, imposed his work and his view of life on the world. In unflagging pursuit of his goal, he was titanic, demiurgic, super-human – and also, frankly, more than a little alarming.' With another Leonard Sachs-like stream of adjectives (perhaps deriving from Callow's stage script?) he tells us his book 'aims to give a sense of what it was like to be near that demanding, tempestuous, haughty, playful, prodigiously productive figure, but also to place him in his world. Wagner belongs as much to the history of ideas and indeed to the history of the 19th century as he does to the history of music.' He also declines musical analysis as 'entirely inappropriate ... all I can write about is the effect of the music ... slightly comforted by the fact that this is the only way Wagner ever wrote about music'.

Callow keeps mostly to his word, helped by his experience of chronicling the complex life of Orson Welles – as he says there in Volume 3 'without resorting to the one-damned-thing-after-another school of biography'. Wagner sketched in barely more than 200 pages plus appendices is no mean achievement. Only occasionally does the reader feel that Callow has been unable to resist, or brutally summarise, the next little biographical turn (especially in the tricky 1860s between Wagner's exile from the Wesendoncks to his adoption by Ludwig II). But it does mean that we get another short-haul biography, albeit one with a clear personality bias.

So I'm not at all sure at who will most appreciate this book. It's not a crime in



Richard Wagner is the subject of Simon Callow's short-haul biography

context but there is absolutely nothing new here for the scholar or Wagner-knower. Also, the student or early-stages Wagnerian will find a number of statements more accurately put elsewhere – Wagner's birth date, where he saw the first of Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient's appearances, Schopenhauer's view of erotic

love, the performances of Beethoven's *Choral* Symphony at the Bayreuth Festival. None of this interferes with the characteristic drive and enthusiasm of Callow's narrative but it does – like the bizarrely translated work list in the appendices – call for a fact-checker.

**Mike Ashman**

# Classics RECONSIDERED



**Mark Pullinger** and **Nalen Anthoni** dedicate some serious listening time to Dennis Brain's recording of the Mozart horn concertos with Karajan – and reassess its iconic status



## Mozart

Horn Concertos Nos 1-4

**Dennis Brain** *h/n* Philharmonia Orchestra /

**Herbert von Karajan**

Warner Classics/EMI

A glance at the title is enough to show that this disc ought to be a winner. And so it is. One could fairly have wished for a lighter, brighter sound in these pieces of occasional Mozart – something more like in texture to the performances we have heard Dennis Brain give with the London Mozart Players.

Here the sound is plushy and comfortable rather than limpid. But after having noted that, we can settle back to enjoy Mr Brain's artistry and virtuosity – but not all four concertos on end, however, one at a time please, else the effect palls. The D major Concerto is the two-movement one consisting of an Allegro and a Rondo (written for Leutgeb) which, according to Saint-Foix and to Einstein (in his monograph, not his edition of Köchel) do not really belong together. Nos 2 and 4

were also written for Leutgeb; no one seems to know much about No 3, of which the autograph has disappeared. This is the concerto with the wonderful Romance as middle movement (the tune of it reappears in the final Rondo).

In one or two places I was not too happy about pitch-steadiness (the opening 20 bars of K417, for example); but the fault, if there be one, is very slight. Slightly more serious is a tempo-sag in the first movement of K447. **Andrew Porter (10/54)**

**Mark Pullinger** Considering the fact that Andrew Porter labelled Dennis Brain's new recording of the Mozart horn concertos 'a winner' in 1954, he sure follows with plenty of caveats. However, he is unequivocal – quite rightly – in his praise for Brain's 'artistry and virtuosity'. This recording is still cited as a reference version, even by today's horn players. What is it about Brain's playing that is so admired?

**Nalen Anthoni** Brain himself was a 'reference' in his day because his command of the horn was unparalleled. Here was a player who, in his total control over an intractable instrument, easily bested colleagues on both sides of the Atlantic. Fortunately, his artistry was such that he was able to use the horn not as an end in itself but as a servant to his own acute musicianship – which, despite the 64-year gap since this recording, still has the power to move.

**MP** Brain's tone is 24-carat gold, his technique outstandingly secure. Each note is hit plumb in the centre and he makes light of the challenges Mozart throws the soloist's way.

Despite Mozart's jibes, which are littered throughout the scores (in different coloured

inks), Joseph Leutgeb must have been a remarkably fine player to essay these concertos on a natural horn. On a modern French horn though, those challenges are lessened and, now that we're used to hearing them played on period instruments, what I miss here is a sense of peril – and a sense of humour. Everything is immaculate.

**NA** The 'sense of peril' you miss is, I believe, largely due to Karajan. AP may have hinted at that when he described the sound as 'plushy and comfortable rather than limpid'. Numerous strings blending with woodwind and orchestral horns, both backwardly balanced, results in a homogeneity that blankets distinctive individual timbres, and tames accents and ensemble attack. I don't believe the engineers are responsible. Karajan is. He preferred this sort of presentation (even ignoring the new tone colour in K447 wrought by Mozart substituting B flat clarinets for oboes), which is more of an impediment today than it was at the time.

**MP** The strings are far too glossy and gloopy for me – chocolate-box Mozart which robs the music of its cheeky, impertinent character.

**NA** As you suggest, period instruments, especially natural horns with their spine-tingling 'sneery' stopped notes, have alerted us to how incisive, even abrasive, 18th-century music can be. Despite a modern horn, Brain could have suggested similar characteristics – but Karajan held him back. A comparison with Karajan's 1969 DG version with Gerd Seifert and the Berlin Philharmonic shows a better-balanced ensemble, but a bigger string band and a similar approach. No changes in 16 years.

**MP** Warner's Dennis Brain Icon box-set includes his earlier recording of No 4 with the Hallé Orchestra under Sir Malcolm Sargent (first two movements) and Laurance Turner (finale) where the textures are much lighter. This is with Brain on his Raoux horn (he had changed to an Alexander by the time of the Philharmonia recordings). There's also a 1946 recording of No 2 conducted by Walter Susskind where there's a real joy in the Philharmonia's responses. Under Karajan, their playing verges on the unsmiling.

But there was obviously a great rapport between Brain and Karajan. I believe he was the only member of the orchestra that



Brain, who died in a car crash 60 years ago aged 36, was the most fêted horn player of the post-war years

Karajan would address by his forename. There's a lovely story about a recording session where Brain split his opening note and Karajan, gently putting down his baton, gave thanks to God that Brain was mortal after all!

**NA** Regrettably, I have never heard those earlier recordings, but I know that Brain switched from a Raoux to an Alexander. And I also know of that lovely story. It speaks of a great *personal* rapport between Brain and Karajan. But on the evidence of these performances their *professional* rapport might have been something else. Karajan was then principal conductor, and off the podium a rapport between principal conductor and principal horn is likely to have been different from that between maestro and principal horn usually at the back of the orchestra. Karajan always got what he wanted from his players. He was the benevolent dictator and Brain – if only for the sake of political peace – would not have opposed him. I think these performances attest to that.

**MP** Brain was the most fêted horn player in the post-war years, hence AP's salivating in his review; but I wonder how much of this

recording's journey to legendary status was due to Brain's tragic early death, at the age of 36, in a car crash. Is there something sentimental going on here? Are recordings by, say, Barry Tuckwell or Günter Högner any less accomplished?

**NA** Difficult question. Certainly he was the most fêted horn player of the post-war years (Stokowski, no less, offered him the first chair in his orchestra), and, placed in the context of his profession, he probably commanded a lot of awe from his peers at a time when his flawless technique was likely to have been the envy of many.

And he was a hidden influence, too, a background presence who lifted the standards of horn playing, creating a sort of chain reaction that spawned equally accomplished post-Brain players like Tuckwell and Högner; and younger ones such as David Pyatt. If there is any sentimentality it has to emanate from consumer marketing that spearheaded the accolade of Great Recording of the Century. I disagree. It might indeed have been a 'great recording' if not for you-know-who.

**MP** In his original review, AP advises against listening to the four concertos one after the

other. He's right – you'd never do this in concert. Listening to them all at once, they do tend to meld together. At their best, though, they can be extremely jocular. I've just relistened to Pip Eastop's terrific period-instrument recording (on Hyperion), where he really relishes the music's humour, adding some very wicked cadenzas. You can't imagine Karajan giving Brain that sort of licence – but then Eastop's conductor is Anthony Halstead, who is, of course, far more in sympathy with the works, having essayed them a few times as soloist on disc himself!

**NA** I wasn't sure whether you'd want to include period-instrument recordings in our discussion, but I'm glad that you have, and I fully concur with your opinion of the Eastop-Halstead performances, which are indeed terrific and very astutely conducted.

**MP** Aren't they tremendous?!

**NA** Which brings us back to Karajan. I have been severely critical of him, but my criticism is about these performances and, in general, his Mozart, whose music he treated with kid gloves. But then his was a time when an urbane, even obsequious approach to the composer was fashionable. When perceptions changed, Karajan was probably too entrenched to follow suit. As a conductor, per se, he became nonpareil. But licence? Perish the thought.

Yet in the cadenzas to the first movements of K447 and K495, Dennis Brain's brief improvisations have a hint of impertinence he seems to have got away with. And if it weren't for the dead hand of Karajan, Brain alone might have persuaded me to listen to all the concertos at a sitting. I have no difficulty doing so with musicians like Eastop, Roger Montgomery, Wilhelm Bruns and Alan Civil, Brain's colleague who replaced him as principal in the Philharmonia.

**MP** So, still a reference recording for horn players, then, but in terms of general recommendations, I think we have to accept that things have moved on?

**NA** Yes, this definitely remains a reference for all horn players and also for anyone who loves insights into interpretation. But if I were to pick one memento of Brain – the unique musician who also lived dangerously, fearing neither horn pyrotechnics nor driving at speed in the sports car in which he met an untimely end – it would be his recording of Strauss's horn concertos, still imparting jaw-dropping amazement 60 years after his death. **G**

# THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

## *Piano works transcribed for orchestra*

**Jeremy Nicholas** delves into a world of miraculous transformation – where a piano masterpiece by one composer is turned into an orchestral masterpiece by another – and selects some of the best recordings

There has always been a symbiotic relationship between the piano and the orchestra. They work well together as a team (as in the amiable dialogues of Mozart's concertos), support each other (as in the slow movements of the Chopin and Brahms concertos) or argue noisily (Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev and Bartók).

They also steal from one another. The piano, with the arguable exception of the organ, is the most expressive and versatile of solo instruments. A clever composer/arranger can transfer the complex textures and voices of a full symphony to the 88 notes of the piano. Liszt's altruistic

endeavour in this field was surely one of the most generous of recreative acts in musical history, transferring all nine of Beethoven's symphonies to the keyboard.

And, of course, the reverse is true. On the opposite page are some of the prime examples of the art of turning a piano masterpiece into an orchestral masterpiece. *Hors de combat* are works that were always intended for orchestra but were scored first for piano (Holst's *The Planets*, for instance); organ works arranged for orchestra (which discounts Gordon Jacob's wonderfully idiomatic version of Elgar's Organ Sonata); and the frankly lacklustre

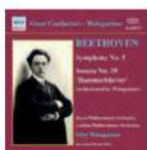
(I have yet to hear an orchestral arrangement of a Liszt *Hungarian Rhapsody* that is more compelling than the piano original).

Why do they do it, these musical alchemists? Readers may remember from my interview with Vladimir Ashkenazy (8/17) that he orchestrated Liszt's Sonata in B minor, one of the towering works of the literature, out of frustration: because he could not play the work in the way that he wished. Occasionally, it is to show that an improvement can be made to earlier versions (see *Les sylphides*). Often, it's for the money, but mainly it is for love of the music and reverence for its composer. **G**



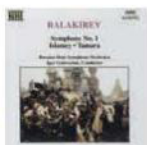
Konstantin Somov's 1932 painting of a Russian ballet performance of *Les sylphides* at the Champs-Élysées Theatre, Paris – four years before Douglas created his own version

PHOTOGRAPHY: ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM; UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD; UK / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES



**Beethoven, orch Weingartner**  
Piano Sonata No 29,  
'Hammerklavier'  
LPO / Felix Weingartner  
Naxos (9/30)

Few musicians of the day revered Beethoven more than Weingartner, the first to record a complete symphony cycle. Using the same forces as the Fifth Symphony, he completed his *Hammerklavier* orchestration in 1925. The third movement is particularly successful, and while the piano trills in the finale and the period string portamento militate against its complete success, this nevertheless remains a noble and notable homage.



**Balakirev, orch Lyapunov**  
*Islamey*, Op 18  
Russian State Symphony  
Orchestra / Igor Golovschin  
Naxos (10/94)

Published in 1869, *Islamey* was considered one of the most difficult works ever written for the piano. Its virtuoso demands are a part of its attraction – a bravura performance can and should thrill an audience – and any orchestration must aspire to the same. Of the two best-known versions by Alfredo Casella and Sergey Lyapunov, it is the latter's that best captures the edge-of-seat excitement, fully realised in Golovschin's crisp, sparkling account.



**Debussy, orch Matthews**  
24 *Préludes*  
Hallé Orchestra / Mark Elder  
Hallé (5/07)

The two books of (24) *Préludes* are so delicately and sensitively bound to the sonority and timbre of the piano that it is something of a miracle to hear them in any other guise. In fact, Colin Matthews's realisations (aided and abetted by the superb playing of the Hallé under Elder) are, more than Peter Breiner's subsequent fine effort in the same task, far more than mere 'orchestrations' – rather they are creative reimaginings with a distinctly personal touch.



**Schumann, orch Glazunov et al**  
*Carnaval*, Op 9  
Suisse Romande Orchestra /  
Ernest Ansermet  
Decca (7/60)

Ravel orchestrated part of *Carnaval*, but the best-known orchestral version of this evergreen suite was the work of four different composers: Glazunov, Rimsky-Korsakov, Lyadov and Tcherepnin. Transformed into a ballet score for a charity concert in 1910 (choreographed by Mikhail Fokine), it achieved worldwide success when mounted by Diaghilev's Ballets Russes later that year. Ansermet's recording has yet to be bettered.



**Mussorgsky, orch Ashkenazy**  
*Pictures at an Exhibition*  
Philharmonia Orchestra /  
Vladimir Ashkenazy  
Decca (11/83)

Ravel's 1922 version, commissioned for Koussevitzky's Boston Symphony Orchestra, is the most frequently performed; yet many prefer the one by Lucien Cailliet for Ormandy's Philadelphia Orchestra (recorded 1937). Ashkenazy's take on it is not dissimilar to the latter and is additionally unique in having the arranger conduct his own arrangement on the same disc as he plays the original work on the piano (both recorded 1982).



**Ravel, orch Constant**  
*Gaspard de la nuit*  
Lyon National Orchestra /  
Leonard Slatkin  
Naxos (1/14)

The daunting challenge of orchestrating *Gaspard* was undertaken by Romanian-born conductor and composer Marius Constant (1925-2004) in what is an extraordinarily evocative and atmospheric achievement. The Naxos disc includes Ravel's own versions of *Valses nobles et sentimentales*, *La valse* and *Le tombeau de Couperin*, though it's a shame that Slatkin did not think to add to Ravel's part-orchestration of *Le tombeau* Michael Round's masterly arrangements of the Fugue and Toccata.



**Brahms, orch Rubbra**  
*Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel*, Op 24  
LSO / Neeme Järvi  
Chandos (2/91)

Devoted Brahmsian Edmund Rubbra arranged this mighty piece in 1938 (Sir Adrian Boult conducted the premiere). Even more unexpectedly, in 1984 Jerome Robbins turned it into a ballet, *Brahms/Handel*. It's a clever imitation of Brahms's orchestral voice and this recording (preferred over the elderly Philadelphia Orchestra one with Ormandy) makes a convincing alternative to the original. It's coupled with Schoenberg's orchestration of Brahms's G minor Piano Quartet.



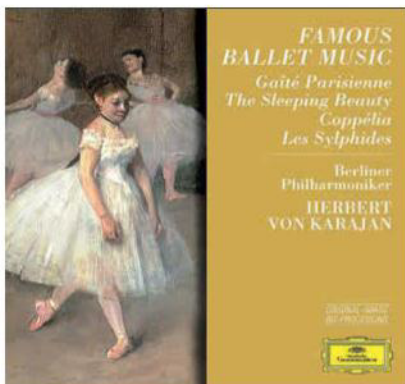
**Schubert, orch Joachim**  
*Grand Duo in C major*, D812  
Chamber Orchestra of Europe /  
Claudio Abbado  
DG (2/89)

Among the lengthiest transformations is Schubert's *Grand Duo* Sonata (not so named by him) for piano four hands. Its four movements were long thought to be the sketches of a symphony, and are thus prime candidates for an orchestral makeover. The great violinist Joseph Joachim's version is just the best-known version of several, albeit dressed in the garb of a later generation. Abbado's outstanding account is part of a set of Schubert's nine symphonies.



**Albéniz, orch Arbós**  
*Iberia*  
London Symphony Orchestra /  
Enrique Bátiz  
Regis (4/82)

For many, *Iberia* is Albéniz's masterpiece – 12 'impressions' (as the composer called them) of Spain written between 1905 and 1908. His friend the violinist, composer and conductor Enrique Fernández Arbós (1863-1939) fashioned an exhilarating orchestral suite from five of them. Including Déodat de Séverac's completion of 'Navarra' (also orchestrated by Arbós), Batiz's vivid 1982 recording, originally on HMV and now on the Regis label, has stood the test of time.



## Chopin, orch Douglas

**Les sylphides** Berlin Philharmonic / Herbert von Karajan  
DG (11/61)

How do you capture the unique sound of Chopin, that most pianistic of all composers, with an orchestra? Using eight of Chopin's works, the original (1909) score for what became the world's first plotless ballet was a collaborative venture using the talents of Taneyev, Lyadov, Glazunov, Tcherepnin and Stravinsky. The premiere was given by Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in Paris. In 1936,

the long-lived British composer and arranger Roy Douglas (1907-2015) created his own version because he was 'disgusted and horrified by the very bad orchestrations of Chopin's music'. It is his score, for which he was initially paid the sum of £25, that has largely replaced earlier versions. Karajan's recording is delightful, surely one of his most successful forays into 'light music'.

# THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

## Machaut's Messe de Nostre Dame

Methods of performing this unique work – the earliest-known setting by a named composer of the Mass Ordinary – have seen drastic changes, as **Fabrice Fitch** notes while savouring a selection of recordings

Guillaume de Machaut's *Messe de Nostre Dame* is an iconic musical work in more ways than one. It is the first surviving setting of the unchanging liturgical sections of the Catholic Mass (the Ordinary) by a named composer. For many years, its composition was linked to the coronation at Reims Cathedral in 1364 of the French king Charles V. Although that theory is now discredited, there's little doubt that Machaut intended it for Reims, where he and his brother Jean were canons: nowadays the Mass is associated with the commemoration they funded in their own memory, to be sung by their burial place in the cathedral. (In this more recent scenario, a date of composition in the 1360s still seems about right.)

No single fact speaks more eloquently to the Mass's popularity in modern times than the nearly three dozen complete recordings to date. And yet, its impact in Machaut's own time may not have been very great. Half a century passed before composers revived the idea of a single-authored Mass Ordinary, and when they did, it took a form quite different from that of Machaut's. So was Machaut's Mass a freak accident, an experiment borne of one of the 14th century's most fertile musical and poetic minds? Not quite: a few 'composite' Ordinaries survive from around the same time (including the dismissal 'Ite missa est' – 'Go, the Mass is ended', which Machaut also sets), and there are also precedents for treating paired movements in a similar way, as he does with the *Gloria–Credo* and *Sanctus–Agnus Dei*. It's likely that Machaut knew of these trends, but there are many

other decisions (the scale of the *Kyrie*, for example) for which precedents are lacking.

Whatever the circumstances of its composition, the Mass is nothing if not memorable. The *Kyrie* has all the monumentality of a Gothic cathedral portal; then there's the stark, declamatory treatment of text in the *Gloria* and *Credo*, powerfully offset by held chords at key moments of the text. For the shorter-texted *Kyrie*, *Sanctus*, *Agnus Dei* and dismissal, Machaut resorts to the most sophisticated technique then available (known today as isorhythm), built on repeating rhythmic patterns that allow the composer to write long-breathed, melismatic music that contrasts with the *Gloria* and *Credo*.

Isorhythm is also used for the concluding 'Amen' of the *Gloria* and *Credo*; the decision to use this learned style in all six movements is a clue to Machaut's ambition, linking the work with the cyclic Mass of the next century. (Can it really be that those later composers knew nothing of his work? I doubt it.) Today's listener is likely to be struck by Machaut's pungent approach to dissonance, or the technique known as hocket (from the French word for hiccup), in which voices exchange quick-fire single notes on and off the beat – features that can still sound surprisingly modern. The earliest recordings coincided with interest on the part of contemporary composers, Stravinsky foremost among them. Machaut's avant-garde champions surely contributed to his Mass's mystique. By the early 1970s, there were nearly a dozen complete recordings, an exceptional number for the time.



An illumination from the manuscript of Machaut's *Remède de fortune*

### PERFORMANCE CHOICES: PRE- AND POST-PARROTT

The discography of Machaut's Mass bears witness to some of the most heated debates among performers of early polyphony down the decades. Of 15 recordings made between 1951 and 1980, the great majority combined voices and instruments. As **Andrew Parrott** observed in a review for the journal *Early Music*, the polychrome approach was not without its problems, particularly with regard to matching



PHOTOGRAPHY: JOSSE CHRISTOPHEL/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

intonation and blending of timbres. Parrott's own recording (1983) famously challenged that approach by recording the Mass with just four singers, setting new standards for ensemble and intonation in the process. The conviction that this *a cappella* manner of performance ought to be the norm was based on widespread research (not least Parrott's own) and turned the tide decisively in the opposite direction: for better or worse, very few recordings since have used instruments.

Parrott also made waves by using high tenors for the upper line. Notwithstanding his arguments for doing so, this did not spell the end for countertenors (sadly the same cannot be said for crumhorns), but it's a convenient marker by which to parse the discography, for the difference between the voice types is just as marked as the difference between solo voices and choir. As we shall see, the roster of countertenors in the available recordings is a roll call of the most famous names in the business; nevertheless,

a surprising number of ensembles have followed Parrott in opting for tenors. Finally, Parrott innovated by recording the Mass not continuously but interspersed with the plainsong (and some of the liturgical actions) that those present at a sung Mass might have experienced. The intention behind this is consonant with the 'heroic' phase of the historically informed performance movement, and again, several recordings up to the present day have followed suit. Two other features worth mentioning are



Graindelavoix may be early music polphony's answer to Marmite but their execution is convincing

the relatively recent adoption of the Gallican pronunciation that Machaut's contemporaries would have used, and the diversity of choice in respect of accidentals. As to the first, it can enhance a fine performance but cannot save an indifferent one; as to the second, Machaut's dissonance treatment is already so idiosyncratic that local decisions only rarely alter the work's profile.

#### EARLY RECORDINGS AND THEIR AFTERMATH

Very few of those early recordings are now readily available. Less than a handful made it to CD, of which the one from **Safford Cape** and Pro Musica Antiqua of Brussels is now the oldest (1956). The vocal quality associated with the early music movement lay far in the future, and by the standards of the time, Pro Musica Antiqua's approach to the 'instruments and voices' question is fairly restrained. (One of the most characteristic features of recordings from this period is the use of instruments on their own for the untexted connective links in the *Gloria* and *Credo*, mentioned earlier.) But it's hard to bridge the aesthetic gap of 60-odd years or

distinguish artistic choices from technical shortcomings: in the 'Amen' sections of the *Gloria* and *Credo*, the tempo flags so soon that little sense of ternary rhythm remains by the end. Recording a few years later, **Alfred Deller's** consort is better disciplined, though rhythmic problems still crop up in faster or intricate sections. Ensemble cohesion is more successful, however, with instrumental participation more pervasive than with Pro Musica Antiqua, and the doubling of lines at the octave being another characteristic sonority of the time. The latter can play havoc with voice-leading, and although Deller's account is far from the worst offender, the tuning of those doublings isn't always secure. More problematic is Deller's own voice, which dominates the texture to such an extent that at times one is conscious of little else.

Probably the most satisfying account available from these early decades is that of **Konrad Ruhland's** Capella Antiqua Munich, whose voices and instruments blend even more convincingly while allowing individual lines to be heard distinctly. Tempos are crisp and lively, and the countertenor lineup sports a young James Bowman. Although

I've not heard all these early recordings, it's difficult to imagine any surpassing Ruhland's ensemble (in 1970), which was among the most skilled of its day.

With scholarly research having cast real doubt on the use of instruments in the sacred music of Machaut's time, the practice fell largely out of favour. (Ars Antiqua de Paris's 1990 account with **Michel Sanvoisin** is a strange throwback, sounding as though it could have been made 20 years earlier by an ensemble with serious shortcomings even by those earlier standards.) In later repertoires the effect of this research was less dramatic, but where instruments were retained the ensembles concerned considered their deployment rather more carefully. The Machaut discography bears traces of this, one of the most telling being the Clemencic Consort's 1999 recording. **René Clemencic** was one of those directors who relished throwing myriad instruments into the mix, but from the mid-1980s his recordings of sacred polyphony increasingly featured solo voices. For the Machaut Mass he went so far as to use tenors on the top lines, but their forthright timbres retain the edginess that characterises the director's approach. Clemencic is an accomplished recorder player, and his love of instruments finds an outlet on the rest of the disc, which portrays events within and outside the medieval church where Machaut's Mass is performed. This is an imaginative, creative response to the challenge thrown down by both scholarship and fashion, and though some of these sideshows stretch one's patience, the performance of the Mass itself is thoroughly engaging.

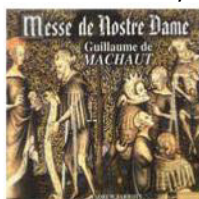
Another contextual shift informs **Simon-Pierre Bestion** and La Tempête, who (in 2016) take inspiration from the link between Machaut's Mass and Stravinsky's (the one having inspired the other). The French ensemble presents the two together so that the undoubted presence of instruments in Stravinsky authorises their inclusion (complete with octave doublings) in Machaut. Purists may sniff, but there are surely enough

#### THE 'HISTORICAL' RECORDING

**Taverner Choir & Consort / Parrott**

Erato (M) ➤ 2434 89982-5

Although some later recordings are more immediately accessible, this finely and



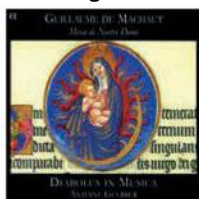
sharply etched account is a watershed in the Machaut discography. Its influence continues to be felt even today. This recording is a must-hear.

#### MOST SATISFYING PROGRAMME

**Diabolus in Musica / Guerber**

Alpha (M) ➤ ALPHA132

For sheer sound, this is the most satisfying recording and the most rounded programme.



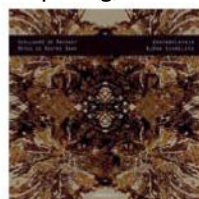
The accompanying plainsong sets off the polyphony marvellously, and a more pondered reading contrasts nicely with the sharper pace of others.

#### THE WILD CARD

**Graindelavoix / Schmelzer**

Glossa (C) GCDP32110

It's hard to decide which is the more off-putting, the 'too cool for school' pose or the vocal mannerisms. All the same, very fine singers and an even finer feeling for ensemble: Graindelavoix, early polyphony's answer to Marmite?





Andrew Parrott's account is a watershed in Machaut's discography

recordings of Machaut's magnum opus to accommodate such reimaginings, especially those as well executed as this. (One thing, though: Machaut's *Credo* is missing, presumably due to lack of space.)

#### COUNTERTENORS: ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS?

Parrott's recording featured two Hilliard Ensemble regulars who committed their own account to disc soon afterwards, with **Paul Hillier** directing. At the time, one wondered how many of Parrott's ideas they had taken on board, for the Hilliard has its customary two singers per part and countertenors on the top line. But if a reminder were needed of how extrovert the early Hilliard Ensemble could be, this recording does the job. They differentiate between the movements by alternating soloists (in the main parts of the *Gloria* and *Credo*) and ensemble, and even with two to a part, the hocket passages fairly sizzle. The *Kyrie* is as monumental as one could wish, though with the Hilliard's trademark smoothness. The syllabic sections of the *Gloria* and *Credo* and the dismissal have the tang of biting into a sharp apple. It's all reminiscent of the ensemble's acclaimed Pérotin disc issued a year later.

By comparison, later recordings with countertenors (all with just soloists) are a mixed bag. Ensemble Gilles Binchois and Cambridge Schola Gregoriana propose liturgical reconstructions, but fall short of those qualities that make the Hilliard's reading so engaging. Of the two, **Dominique Vellard's** ensemble is the more assured technically, the quality of his voices far surpassing those of **Mary Berry's** group – as well it might, with Andreas Scholl on the top line; but the rhythmic energy that underpins Machaut's counterpoint is

entirely lacking and his dissonances likewise pass unnoticed. (Persuasive as Vellard can be in 13th-century music, his love of later sacred polyphony has seldom fully translated onto disc.) Oxford Camerata is just as polished as the Ensemble Gilles Binchois (this time it's the wonderful Robin Blaze on the top line), and **Jeremy Summerly** is on the side of the angels in more ways than one. He's one of the few directors to take literally the injunction in the sources to sing the first 'Kyrie' three times, and he just about pulls it off.

The recording venue was Reims Cathedral itself (as it was with Schola Gregoriana), the singers working in near-freezing temperatures. There may be something to the claim in the booklet notes that the conditions affected the sound recording, for it's certainly atmospheric. Although the latter movements are a touch becalmed, there's an intent that Vellard's reading lacks.

#### A MIXED ENSEMBLE

However few certainties there may be in matters of early vocal performance, we can be quite sure that Machaut's Mass would never have been sung by women, though that's no reason to exclude them today. The French ensemble Musica Nova (director **Lucien Kandel**) boasts some of the finest singers around and a reputation

for tackling particularly complex early polyphonic scores. The confidence with which they tackle the clutch of accompanying isorhythmic motets is invigorating, but in the Mass itself the slow tempos are frankly puzzling. That the ensemble pulls it off is a testament to its quality, and though I was baffled when the disc first came out I've grown to appreciate its seriousness of purpose, attention to detail and sheer musicality. Incidentally, although the booklet notes dwell at length on the choices for unwritten accidentals (*musica ficta*), which are strikingly at odds with other recordings, not a word is there about tempo, whose consequences are just as audible and as much at odds with comparable performances.

Among mixed ensembles, Musica Nova stands alone. The Belgian Laudantes Consort (director **Guy Janssens**) and the French Obsidienne (**Emmanuel Bonnardot**) have multiple voices on each part, which feels wrong and works in neither case. Although nothing goes badly amiss, Obsidienne is no match for more specialist ensembles either vocally or technically, and a dry acoustic does the sound image few favours. The Laudantes Consort's tempos verge on the funereal: in hocket passages the pedantic staccato delivery is near impossible to execute convincingly (they don't); and elsewhere, the shaping of isorhythmic sections and the declamation of syllabic ones is seriously undernourished.

The most recent addition to the catalogue, from the **Vienna Vocal Consort**, is to date the only one-to-a-part *a cappella* recording to use female voices, but its cautious approach borders on hesitancy and similarly fails to impress.

## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

RECORDING DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1956 Pro Musica Antiqua / <b>Cape</b>	Archiv (M) 477 7085AH (1/72 <sup>n</sup> , 5/97 <sup>n</sup> )
1961 Deller Consort / <b>Deller</b>	DHM (M) 82876 68362.2 (6/73 <sup>n</sup> , 5/89 <sup>n</sup> )
1970 Capella Antiqua Munich / <b>Ruhland</b>	Teldec (P) WPCS22030 (3/71 <sup>n</sup> )
1983 Taverner Choir & Consort / <b>Parrott</b>	Erato (M) 2434 89982-5 (3/84 <sup>n</sup> , 8/88 <sup>n</sup> )
1987 Hilliard Ensemble / <b>Hillier</b>	Hyperion (P) CDA66358 (2/90)
1988 Ensemble Gilles Binchois / <b>Vellard</b>	Brilliant (S) 94217
1990 Ars Antiqua de Paris / <b>Sanvoisin</b>	Edelweiss (M) ED5021
1995 Ensemble Organum / <b>Péres</b>	Harmonia Mundi (M) HMG50 1590 (2/97 <sup>n</sup> )
1996 Oxford Camerata / <b>Summerly</b>	Naxos (M) 8 553833 (2/97)
1999 Clemencic Consort / <b>Clemencic</b>	Arte Nova (M) 74321 85289-2
1999 Laudantes Consort / <b>Janssens</b>	Cypres (S) CYP1630 (8/02)
2001 Obsidienne / <b>Bonnardot</b>	Calliope (P) CAL9318
2004 Cambridge Schola Gregoriana / <b>Berry</b>	Herald (M) HAVPCD312 (7/06)
2007 Diabolus in Musica / <b>Guerber</b>	Alpha (M) ALPHA132 (4/09)
2007 Estonian Philh Chbr Ch; Orlando Consort / <b>Hillier</b>	Harmonia Mundi (P) HMU80 7469 (10/08)
2010 Musica Nova / <b>Kandel</b>	Aeon (P) AECD1093 (2/11)
2015 Graindelavoix / <b>Schmelzer</b>	Glossa (P) GCDP32110 (6/16)
2016 Tempête / <b>Bestion</b>	Apha (P) ALPHA261 (5/17)
2017 Vienna Vocal Consort	Klanglogo (P) KL1412 (10/17)

# STATE ACADEMIC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA «EVGENY SVETLANOV»

## HISTORY OF EXCELLENCE

### Highlights of the 2017/18 season:

#### 29 October 2017

Moscow International House of Music  
S. Rachmaninov, I. Stravinsky  
Soloist – Boris Berezovsky (piano)  
Conductor – Vasily Petrenko

#### 9 November 2017

The Great Hall of the Moscow  
Conservatory  
S. Prokofiev, D. Shostakovich,  
M. Weinberg, A. Vustin  
Soloists – Gidon Kremer (violin),  
Maksim Mikhailov (bass),  
The Sveshnikov State Academic  
Choir of Russia  
Yurlov State Academic Capella of Russia  
Conductor – Vladimir Jurowski

#### 12 November 2017

Tchaikovsky Concert Hall  
R. Strauss, V. Silvestrov  
Soloist – Gidon Kremer (violin)  
Conductor – Vladimir Jurowski

#### 25 December 2017

The Great Hall of the Moscow  
Conservatory  
N. Rimsky-Korsakov, S. Rachmaninov  
Soloist – Dmitry Masleev (piano)  
Conductor – Vasily Petrenko

#### 17 February 2018

Tchaikovsky Concert Hall  
J. Haydn, S. S. Prokofiev, R. Schedrin  
Soloists – Pavel Milyukov (violin),  
Vladislav Lavric (trumpet)  
Conductor – Vladimir Jurowski

#### 20 February 2018

The Great Hall of the Moscow  
Conservatory  
P. Tchaikovsky, A. Schnittke  
Soloist – Aleksander Knyazev (cello)  
Conductor – Vladimir Jurowski

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Paul Hillier draws a rounded interpretation that is hard to fault from the Hilliard Ensemble in their superb 1987 recording for Hyperion

### VERSIONS WITH HIGH TENORS: THE PICK OF THE CROP?

It does seem to me that the most characterful and convincing accounts of Machaut's Mass are to be found among those with high tenors. Concerning the Taverner Consort's groundbreaking performance, David Fallows observed in an otherwise glowing review (3/84) that the adoption of a lower pitch led to a loss of textural clarity. (The same might be said of the Orlando Consort under **Paul Hillier**, whose tentative 2007 reading may have been the result of a change of personnel to accommodate the lower pitch; I hope that their so-far-impressive multi-volume Machaut venture with Hyperion will allow them a second bite of the cherry.) Subsequent recordings have afforded greater transparency of texture while finding new things to say. I've already mentioned Clemencic's canny conversion to the '*a cappella* heresy', as some called it at the time. A more radical, not to say notorious approach came in 1995 from Ensemble Organum. **Marcel Pérès's** investment in folk traditions (and what is sometimes called the 'Oriental hypothesis') is given one of its more uncompromising outings in Machaut. The vocal delivery is reminiscent of the improvised polyphony of Corsican and Sardinian monks; that's to say that vocal delivery is both full-throated and nasal, and those not already familiar

with it may find it takes some getting used to. In addition, he imports his luxuriant plainchant ornamentation into the polyphony. This asks legitimate questions about our (pre)conceptions of what Machaut's singers actually sounded like. In this, Pérès is not so far from Parrott in intention, however distant they may be from each other aesthetically. Strangely, neither performance quite delivers on the boldness of its premises. Superb as they are, one senses the Taverner Consort at times holding something back, while Pérès's lineup lacks the stellar vocal quality of earlier years.

Two more recent recordings respond more or less directly to these two trailblazers. Like Ensemble Organum, **Antoine Guerber's** *Diabolus in Musica* offers a 'semi-staged' liturgical reconstruction in which ornamentation (albeit more restrained than in the Pérès) occasionally finds its way into both polyphony and plainsong. For vocal quality, Guerber's reading may just be the most satisfying available – rich and treacly. The sound recording is so clear that the textural concerns noted earlier don't apply. Having criticised others for being under tempo, I should say that Guerber is also on the slow side, but with a texture as sonorous as this, rhythmic details require more space to come through. Very occasionally, this catches the singers out, but Guerber's deliberation

is a welcome alternative to more energetic interpretations, and the plainchant (always one of his strengths) is superb.

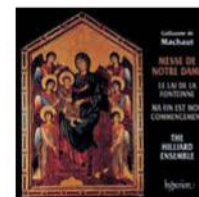
Last up, the wannabe bad boys of today's early polyphony scene, Graindelavoix. In ways too numerous to name, **Björn Schmelzer's** take on the Mass is a reboot of Pérès's but executed more convincingly, as I noted in my 2016 review, and with a better sound recording. A year on, though, irritation has the upper hand over superlatives: its more grating mannerisms don't wear well on repeated listening – a suspicion that Schmelzer's iconoclastic pose only aggravates. It would be lazy of his detractors simply to ignore the questions raised by his approach; equally, Pérès has the good grace to acknowledge that his hypotheses might well be wide of the mark. Would that Schmelzer were so candid. **G**

### TOP CHOICE

**Hilliard Ensemble / Hillier**

Hyperion © CDA66358

There are more idiosyncratic readings of Machaut's Mass, but as a rounded



interpretation this is hard to fault: both the detail and the longer-term pacing are convincingly articulated, and the Hilliards sound at their best.

# PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

Presenting live concert and opera performances from around the world, and reviews of archived music-making available online to stream when you want, where you want

## All Saint's Church, Dulverton & BBC Radio 3's Live in Concert

### Endellion Quartet and pianist Barry Douglas join forces for Brahms, October 15

The Endellion and Barry Douglas visit the South West of England this month thanks to Devon's Two Moors Festival, meaning an opportunity for British readers not only to hear them outside of the capital, but in somewhere a little more atmospheric than a standard concert hall. The work featuring all five musicians is Brahms's Piano Quartet in G minor, Op 25 No 1, and those who remember some of their musical theory will spot that there's a G tonality theme to the entire concert, because the other two works are Haydn's String Quartet in G, Op 54 No 1 and Beethoven's String Quartet in D, Op 18 No 3. The concert will go out live on BBC Radio 3, as will Douglas's solo programme the previous day of Tchaikovsky, Schubert and Britten.

[thetwomoorsfestival.co.uk](http://thetwomoorsfestival.co.uk), [bbc.co.uk/radio3](http://bbc.co.uk/radio3)

## Metropolitan Opera, New York & cinemas worldwide as part of Met Live in HD

### Die Zauberflöte, October 14

When New York's Metropolitan Opera first

launched its Live in HD initiative back in 2006, it did so with an abridged English-language version of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. Now, over a decade later, Mozart's enduringly popular opera gets to appear in the cinemas for the first time in the original German version, and in Julie Taymor's eye-grabbing 2004 production. For those unfamiliar with Taymor's name, she was the director behind the Broadway production of *The Lion King* (with an earlier 1993 production of *Die Zauberflöte* already under her belt), and this highly acclaimed staging very much tallies with that. Think kaleidoscopic colour and brilliance, references of the Kabbalah, Tantric Buddhism and various folk traditions interwoven with the original Masonic symbology. The Met's Music Director Emeritus James Levine is on the conductor's podium. Meanwhile Pamina is sung by the fast-rising South African soprano Golda Shultz, who's been making a bit of a name for herself in Mozartian roles, partnered by American tenor Charles Castronovo as Tamino. Also on the cast list are Kathryn Lewek as Queen of the Night, and Rene Papé as Sarastro. [metopera.org](http://metopera.org), [metopera.org/Season/In-Cinemas](http://metopera.org/Season/In-Cinemas)

## The Greene Space at WNYC and WQXR studios, New York & online

### Leif Ove Andsnes plays Sibelius, October 16

The Greene Space is an intimate conversation and concert platform heard everywhere across New York's WNYC and classical WQXR public radio. This particular event, which is being videocast for free via WQXR's Facebook Live page, sees Leif Ove Andsnes perform some of the works from his new Sibelius album for Sony Classical. So given the extent to which Sibelius's solo piano music has been overshadowed by his symphonic writings, this performance is likely to contain works you're not all that (or at all) familiar with. The programme isn't an all-Sibelius affair though, because it will also be nodding to Andsnes's current Artist-in-Residence position with the New York Philharmonic.

[facebook.com/WQXRClassical/](https://facebook.com/WQXRClassical/)

## TivoliVredenburg, Netherlands & online

### International Franz Liszt Piano Competition, October 8-21 (Finals October 18, 21 & 22)

This Utrecht-based competition is entirely devoted to the piano works of Franz Liszt. It's open to pianists aged between 19 and

## ONLINE OPERA REVIEW

**Puccini's Tosca from Norway and directed by Calixto Bieito tries to shock but doesn't carry it off ...**

### Puccini

Calixto Bieito's new production of Puccini's 'shabby little shocker' for Norwegian National Opera starts off intriguingly and encouragingly. Cavaradossi (an eloquent Daniel Johansson) is some sort of experimental artist, preparing an eccentric *tableau vivant*. During their Act 1 duet, he and Svetlana Aksenova's Tosca (strongly sung but a little strident) fill the big, dark space of Susanne Gschwendner's set with crisscrossing white tape, which Scarpia's heavies proceed to tear down during the *Te Deum*. Claudio Sgura's Scarpia, it is clear, is the personification of political violence and sadism. He humiliates the



poor woman at the heart of the tableau; the chorus of his followers, aggressively lit from behind, stares down the audience.

From then on, we have Bieito's familiar focus on gratuitous humiliation and

violence – especially towards women. But we lose track of the promising initial idea; the central characters, hardly the most sympathetic at the best of times, become empty cardboard cut-outs – Act 3's lollipop-licking, fag-smoking Shepherd Boy struck me as a lot more interesting. The ultimate message, meanwhile, is a generalised, obvious one about the evils of, well, evil politicians. Musically things are solid, but this unsatisfying production shows that a shabby

*Tosca* isn't necessarily a shocking – or particularly interesting – one.

**Hugo Shirley**

Available to view for free (until October 31) at [theoperaplatform.eu](http://theoperaplatform.eu)

## Anoushka Shankar plays her father's Second Sitar Concerto with the Berlin Philharmonic and Zubin Mehta

## Ravi Shankar

It was Zubin Mehta who premiered Ravi Shankar's Second Sitar Concerto with the New York Philharmonic in 1981. Shankar composed it for himself, of course, and his daughter, Anoushka, is the only other sitarist to have played it, giving this performance a clear stamp of authority.

Ravi Shankar composed three sitar concertos, the third one for Anoushka. The second, subtitled *Raga-Mala* ('Garland of Ragas'), is a massive 70-minute piece in four rhapsodic movements. It's symphonic in length, but not in structure, although it successfully displays what a sitar and orchestra can do. A ragamala is when an Indian classical performer strings a



number of ragas together rather than sticking to one. There are some 21 ragas in this concerto, with the dawn raga 'Lalit' in the opening movement and 12 of them tumbling over each other in the pacy last movement. Fortunately the orchestra isn't required to play in any

unconventional tuning, although there are complex rhythmic cycles. Ravi Shankar couldn't read or write music, so the piece was orchestrated by José Luis Greco with several instrumental solos and lots of percussion.

The TV coverage, on seven remotely operated cameras, works pretty well on conductor and orchestra, but is less successful on capturing the overall sculptural image of the soloist with her instrument. (The concert also includes an incisive performance of Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*.) **Simon Broughton**

Available via various subscription packages to the Berlin Philharmonic's Digital Concert Hall, from seven days (€9.90) to 12 months (€149), at [digitalconcerthall.com](http://digitalconcerthall.com)

29, and it's very much one worth winning because the three main prizewinners receive a career development programme valued at over €300,000, consisting of an international concert tour, coaching and training opportunities, promotion support and up to three years of concert management. It may well represent your first encounter with a soon-to-become-familiar name too, because the last competition in 2014 was won by Mariam Batsashvili. 2017 is set to make for particularly satisfying home viewing, not only because they're adding a chamber music round this year, with violinist Barnabás Kelemen, but because the remote viewing and participation options are extensive; it will be streamed live both on the competition's website and Facebook page. The October 21 finals gala in particular will be worth catching because its Facebook page will be streaming it in 360-degree video.

[liszt.nl](http://liszt.nl), [facebook.com/Liszt.Competition/](https://facebook.com/Liszt.Competition/)

### Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow & cinemas worldwide

#### Le Corsaire, October 22

If you like your ballet productions large and opulent then look no further than this cinema broadcast - live from Moscow - of the Bolshoi's 2007 production of *Le Corsaire*, based on Byron's 1814 epic. Reworked by Alexi Ratmansky and Yuri Burlaka, and with the score that Aleksander Troitsky restored from the original Adam/Delibes score in the archives of La Bibliothèque nationale de France, the production uses Marius Petipa's famous, party-piece choreography, so expect large whole-company scenes, lots of flashy

choreography, and a whopping onstage shipwreck too. On the conductor's podium is Bolshoi conductor Pavel Klinichev.

[bolshoi.ru](http://bolshoi.ru), [bolshoiballetincinema.com](http://bolshoiballetincinema.com)

### Royal Opera House, Covent Garden & cinemas nationwide

#### Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, October 23

Director Christopher Wheeldon's imagining of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* for the Royal Ballet first burst onto the Covent Garden stage in 2011, and has quickly become a staple of the company's repertoire. The staging itself is a Technicolor feast of puppetry and projections. However, just as crucial to the production's success has been Joby Talbot's score, which is both beautiful and exceptionally clever. In it you'll hear contemporary sound worlds, but also unmistakable references to the ballet scores of the 19th century, including a wonderful funny moment when music and choreography combine to comic effect in the form of an affectionate send-up of the famous 'Rose Adagio' from *Sleeping Beauty*, featuring the Queen of Hearts. This 2017 staging sees Koen Kessel conduct the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, with Royal Ballet Principal Lauren Cuthbertson in the title-role.

[roh.org.uk/showings/alices-adventures-in-wonderland-live-2017](http://roh.org.uk/showings/alices-adventures-in-wonderland-live-2017)

### Hallé St Peter's, Ancoats, Manchester & online

#### Psappha launch their season with two UK premieres, October 26

Manchester-based contemporary classical music ensemble Psappha's new season

is celebrating women composers. Their season launch concert, of which films of the performance will appear on Psappha's YouTube channel, kicks this theme off with the UK premieres of a pair of works by two fast-rising younger generation US composers. First, *Rave* by Molly Joyce, whose previous commissioners include the mandolinist Avi Avital, and you can get a taster of this particular piece for piano and pre-recorded electronics on the Canadian pianist Vicky Chow's 2016 album, 'Aorta'. Then there's Sarah Kirkland Snider's song cycle, *Penelope* - conducted by Richard Balcombe with the mezzo Jessica Walker - which is a thoroughly different sound world blending art song with indie rock and chamber folk. The cross-Atlantic theme continues with the third piece on the programme, *Steelworks*, by the British but now US-based composer Anna Clyne.

[psappha.com](http://psappha.com)

### Philharmonie, Berlin & online

#### Simon Rattle conducts Petrushka, November 3

Simon Rattle lands in London this season, finally taking up his much-anticipated role at the helm of the London Symphony Orchestra. However, this concert sees him back with the Berlin Philharmonic and with Stravinsky, the composer through whose works he and the orchestra have given some of their finest performances of his tenure. *Petrushka* is joined on the programme by the world premiere of a new work from Unsuk Chin, plus Rachmaninov's Symphony No 3. They then take the programme on an Asian tour.

[digitalconcerthall.com](http://digitalconcerthall.com)

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# HIGH FIDELITY

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THIS MONTH An intriguing network solution, headphones for use on the move, and is streaming technology at last beginning to make sense? **Andrew Everard, Audio Editor**

## New speakers and a £30000 cartridge reinvented

Major brands are launching new ranges to tempt us to stay in and make more of our music

At this time of year, the top hi-fi names tend to go in for a spot of reinvention, and that's the case with two of the best-known brands in British loudspeakers, Monitor Audio and Bowers & Wilkins. Each has a new line-up, drawing on technology from its manufacturer's flagship designs.

Monitor Audio's Silver series has just hit its sixth generation, with two standmount models, three floorstanders, two centre channel and one surround speakers, and a matching active subwoofer **1**. Prices start at £500 for a pair of the smallest Silver 50 standmounters and rise to the £1500 three-way Silver 500 floorstanders, with the subwoofer, combining a 30cm driver and 500W of Class D amplification, also at £1500. All the models are available in black oak, natural oak, rosenut and walnut veneers, plus a new satin white, with high-gloss black available as an extra-cost option.

Also rethinking one of its popular speaker ranges is Bowers & Wilkins, which is replacing its CM2 series with an all-new 700 Series line-up **2**, with prices starting from around £700 a pair. The smallest of three standmount models is the 707 S2, with the 705 S2 model offering the 'tweeter on top' design. Three floorstanding models



start from the 704 S2 at £1698/pr and go up to the flagship 702 S2 at just under £3300/pr, again with the 'tweeter on top' design. The company explains that while the previous CM2 range was basically an upgrade of the entry-level 600 series, the new ones draw heavily on the reference 800 Series Diamond models. A carbon double-dome tweeter is used, with a reinforcing ring behind the main dome to add stiffness, while the mid-range unit (or mid/bass unit in the standmount models) uses the Continuum cone first seen in the latest 800 series models. The speakers are available in a choice of gloss black, satin white or rosenut finish, and there are two matching centre speakers.

Also new from the Bowers & Wilkins stable are new components in Rotel's 15 series: the £999 RC-1572 pre-amplifier,

RA-1572 integrated amplifier (£1495) and RCD-1572 CD player (£849) **3**. The two amplification products use relay switching of inputs and AKM 32-bit/768kHz digital-to-analogue conversion, and have a high-quality moving magnet phono stage along with integrated Bluetooth and dedicated rear power for the addition of a Google Chromecast Audio unit. The integrated amp adds 120Wpc Class AB power amplification. Meanwhile, the CD player has a newly designed CD transport mechanism and the tried-and-tested Wolfson WM8740 DAC, used in differential mode to support the player's choice of RCA and balanced XLR outputs.

Finally this month, cartridge specialist Ortofon has launched an upgraded version of its 2008 MC Windfield moving coil model, named after designer Per Windfield **4**. The new Windfield Ti, which sells for £3100, has a body with a titanium core made using the same Selective Laser Technology as the company's flagship MC Anna model, with which it also shares the company's Replicant 100 diamond stylus on a boron cantilever. The generator system uses a neodymium magnet and Aucurum 6NX coils, and the suspension system employs the company's Wide Range Damping system. **G**

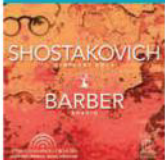
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# OCTOBER TEST DISCS



A gloriously vibrant recording of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony by the Pittsburgh forces under Manfred Honeck, lovingly captured by Reference recordings with exemplary sound quality.



An exciting programme of music composed for the Edinburgh Musical Society, this typically crisp, clean and captivating Linn set by Ensemble Marsyas sounds wonderful throughout.

## REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

### Moon Neo MiND

Simple looks hide an extremely competent network music solution from the Canadian high-end manufacturer

There can be no doubt by now that network music is here to stay. It's not going to replace your CD collection just yet, if ever, but it does allow the convenience of on-demand access to your library with enhanced searching, plus the ability to supplement your collection with the addition of streaming music services offering an all-but-limitless range of content across a variety of genres.

In fact, you could probably survive with just streaming services, were you prepared to pay several subscriptions to make sure you could access all the music you require: from their beginnings in the mainstream areas of rock, pop and the like, the streaming offerings have expanded to offer more comprehensive libraries. Meanwhile, more niche offerings have sprung up to cater for more specialised tastes, such as we classical music lovers, as I explain in this month's Audio Essay on page 128.

However, as I think I have said more than once recently, I still don't think just using streaming is yet a total solution, and neither would I suggest anyone with a large collection of CDs junks the whole lot and throws themselves on the mercy of streaming. Instead, the sensible solution is to invest in equipment able to deliver both a 'local' library – ie one stored on

a computer or NAS drive in one's own home – and also access streaming services.

How one goes about that is a matter of personal preference. One can buy a complete system able to do the job, in the form of an all-in-one network player complete with amplification, to

*I wouldn't suggest anyone with a large collection of CDs junks the whole lot and throws themselves on the mercy of streaming*

which one only needs add speakers; as a player component designed for use with conventional amplification; or as a 'bridge' unit designed to interface with a high-quality digital system. That could be almost anything with a digital audio interface, from a dedicated digital-to-analogue converter to one of the many amplifiers now providing a digital input or even an AV receiver.

Last month I looked at one example of such a 'bridge' device, in the form of the dCS unit, made in the UK; this month it's the turn of the £1699 Neo MiND – or, to give it its full name, the Moon by Simaudio Neo MiND – which hails from Canada. This unassuming black box, with

### MOON BY SIMAUDIO NEO MIND



**Type** Network music player

**Price** £1699

**Input connectivity** Wi-Fi, Ethernet, Bluetooth with aptX

**Outputs** Coaxial/optical and AES/EBU digital

**Other connections** SimLink in/out, remote infrared receiver

**File formats handled** WAV, FLAC, FLAC HD, AIFF, AAC, ALAC, MP3, WMA-9 and OGG Vorbis formats – at up to 192kHz/24-bit

**Streaming services supported** Deezer, Qobuz, Tidal, TuneIn radio

**Accessories supplied** Remote handset, Wi-Fi and Bluetooth antennae

**Dimensions** (WxHxD) 17.8 x 7.6 x 28.0 cm

**simaudio.com**

**renaissanceaudio.co.uk** (UK distributor)

not much on show save the odd button and light on its front panel and two little rubber stub antennae poking up from the rear, is in fact a pretty flexible link between the home network (and thus the internet) and anything with a digital audio input.

Why MiND? Well, the acronym stands for Moon intelligent Network Device, and the unit not only works as what its Quebec-based manufacturer

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## SUGGESTED PARTNERS

The MiND is designed to stream music from a home network – partner it with these ...

### SYNOLOGY DS216

Synology has a fine reputation when it comes to home media storage: this two-disc DS216j model is a solid NAS choice.



### NAIM DAC-V1

With a design very similar to that of the MiND and superb sound (plus built-in pre-amp), the Naim DAC-V1 will make a fine partner.



calls a 'Network Streaming Music Player' but can also – via the company's proprietary SimLink protocol – control other Moon components.

It's a half-width unit, less than 18cm wide, the styling of which kept reminding me of the old Naim UnitiServe and indeed that company's smaller power supplies, and as well as network connectivity via Ethernet or Wi-Fi also offers Bluetooth with aptX, this explaining the twin antennae. Buttons select the network input or Bluetooth, with indicators for this and also the sampling frequency of the content being received, and there's also a standby button, with the main power switch to the rear beside the mains input.

The unit will accept audio in WAV, FLAC, FLAC HD, AIFF, AAC, ALAC, MP3, WMA-9 and OGG Vorbis formats, at up to 192kHz/24-bit, and digital outputs are provided on S/PDIF electrical and TosLink optical connections, and an AES/EBU socket. As well as UPnP/DLNA playback from suitable network-connected storage, the MiND will also access Deezer, Tidal and Qobuz streaming services, along with the tens of thousands of radio streams available via the TuneIn platform.

The absence of any display on the device means the remote control supplied is really only relevant if you're thinking of using the Neo as a control point for connected Moon equipment – you can't use the handset to select albums or streams/radio stations to be played, for example – but fortunately there is a free MiND Controller app available for both iOS and Android devices, giving complete operation of the device. That extends to fingertip browsing of the network library, streaming content and internet radio stations.

## PERFORMANCE


With the app in place, the MiND is as simple to use as it is to instal. If you're using it purely on Wi-Fi, you'll need to go into the app, connected to the player either via Bluetooth or via your router and a wired Ethernet connection to the MiND, in order to enter your network security settings. With that done, you can disconnect the network cable 'twixt router and MiND if you wish, but I'd

suggest you stick to a wired connection if possible, for reasons of stability rather than sound quality. Yes, the Wi-Fi connection should be able to handle the music formats available via the MiND unless your router is at one end of the house and the Moon the other, but in a busy wireless environment there's always the possibility of dropouts.

It's worth noting those limitations of the MiND, too, at least if you're the kind of user for whom 'only' 192kHz/24 bit is a limitation. Of course digital output formats here create that limitation, but just bear in mind that if you're one of those people with lots of DSD files or whatever, the MiND isn't for you.

Oh, and once connected to the internet, it's worth checking that the firmware of the unit is up to date, which you can do either via the app or using a button on the rear of the MiND itself. Switch the unit off, hold the button in with a pin or paperclip, power up again and the 'update' LED will flash while it checks and, if required, updates itself. Once the update is done, it will reboot and you're ready to go.

Rather like the dCS Network Bridge I reviewed last month, the MiND doesn't have a sound as such, but comparing it with some alternative ways of accessing network, including a Mac Mini computer and my Raspberry Pi/HiFiBerry combination, showed it to give a cleaner presentation, with better definition and resolution, almost as though the noise-floor was somewhat lowered. True, the MiND run into the digital inputs of my Naim NDS gave away some weight and slam to the Salisbury player's internal streaming section, which produced a sound with even greater conviction, but then the Naim with its 555PS power supply is pushing towards 10 times the price of the Moon, which would leave a buyer of the MiND with more than adequate funds for a good DAC.

What's excellent here is the well-sorted app and the way it works with the MiND itself, allowing you to search your library or a streaming service, add tracks or albums to a play-queue and even fast forward or rewind within a track. It's both intuitive and flexible, and makes using the unit a pleasure, whether you are familiar with streaming players or new to all this stuff. 

## Or you could try...

**While the MiND is optimised for audio, it's possible to achieve the same functionality on a very tight budget, provided you know what you're doing when it comes to computing.**

### HiFiBerry Digi+ digital output board

The little HiFiBerry Digi+ digital output board, when used with a Raspberry Pi computer, could have you up and running for around the £100 mark, connecting to your network and outputting audio on either coaxial or optical sockets. And the HiFiBerry website is a mine of information, at [hifiberry.com](http://hifiberry.com).



### Mac Mini

You could use a home computer to stream from your network outputting audio via USB or S/PDIF audio to a suitable DAC. Models such as this Mac Mini can be run 'headless' – ie without a display – under the control of a tablet or phone app: prices for new Mac Minis start at £479 but there's a huge number of used ones out there for much less. See [apple.com](http://apple.com).



### dCS Network Bridge

The dCS Network Bridge, reviewed last month, does a similar job to the Moon but offers greater flexibility and will handle higher-resolution audio formats. Mainly designed for use with its manufacturer's high-end DACs, it can also be used with more modest digital hardware. For more details, see [dcsld.co.uk](http://dcsld.co.uk).



### PS Audio DirectStream Junior DAC

PS Audio's DirectStream Junior DAC is an especially fine-sounding converter, with format handling all the way up to DSD, as you might expect from the name. It can be used straight into a power amplifier or active speakers, thanks to a built-in volume control; and, while it costs £4000, it does have the company's network bridge technology built in. See [psaudio.com](http://psaudio.com).



## ● REVIEW SENNHEISER PXC550

# 'Phones for the discerning

Smart wireless headphones combine noise-cancellation with fine sound and clever app control

However much one is devoted to the sound of music played on a decent-size pair of speakers – it's hard to beat that sense of a big soundscape laid out before the listener – there are times when only a good pair of headphones will do.

That was brought home to me during the summer when I found myself on a packed flight heading for Portugal for a working break, and realised it possibly hadn't been quite the most sensible idea to fly out on the first weekend of the school holidays. Fortunately, I was able to shut myself away for the duration inside and catch up on some recent releases, courtesy of the really rather excellent Sennheiser PXC550 headphones I was trying in place of my usual Snugs in-ear monitors.

The sound is exceptionally convincing, from powerful orchestral bass to fine chamber detail

Combining noise-cancellation with aptX Bluetooth connection (which I hasten to say I wasn't using on the flight), and with an intuitive app to control the set-up and operation when you do use the wireless link, the Sennheiser headphones retail for £330 and are aimed, the company says, at the 'discerning business traveller'.

Actually, the more prosaic explanation of the targeting of the PXC550 is that it is aimed squarely at the Bose QuietComfort 35 model, which is a little less expensive than the model we have here but offers a broadly similar range of functionality. And, like the Sennheiser, the Bose uses technology originally designed to be used up at the front of the plane, where the drivers sit: Bose calls its version Acoustic Noise Cancelling, even though it's actually an active electronic system, not a purely acoustic one, while Sennheiser uses its proprietary NoiseGard Hybrid Adaptive system to the same end.

The thinking is the same. Microphones measure the ambient noise and then inject a phase-inverted version of it into the signal heading for your ears in order to cancel it out, this process making the cancellation rather better for continuous noise, such as

the drone of an aircraft's engines or a train, for example, than sporadic sounds.

Using the PXC550 reveals it to be a particularly well-sorted design, with lots of clever touches. Power is turned on and off by unfolding or folding the headphones or – if already unfolded and in 'sleep mode' – twisting the ear-cups, while voice prompts tell you what's going on, from the battery state to Bluetooth pairing. The inbuilt battery, charged using the USB cable supplied, is said to be good for 30 hours' use, a claim I can well believe having used the PXC550 extensively and rarely running out of power, and the conventional headphone cable supplied automatically puts the headphones into flight mode, turning off the Bluetooth connection, when it's plugged in.

Several small buttons arrayed round the right earcup control detail functions, but it's much easier to use the free CapTune app (for iOS and Android) to select tracks and control playback. However, I do like the 'trackpad' outer surfaces of the ear-cups, which enable volume, track-skip and so on with just a tap or swipe.

### PERFORMANCE

I used the Sennheisers with a range of devices, including my iPhone and an Android tablet in both 'smart' Bluetooth mode and with a conventional cable connection, and as a 'dumb' Bluetooth device with my little AK Jr personal player. The first impressions were that the comfort of the fit means the 227g weight of the headset isn't onerous over extended listening, and that the sound of the headphones is exceptionally convincing, from a powerful bass with large-scale orchestral music to fine definition and detail with the complexities of chamber pieces. Indeed, this design sounds so good when the equaliser built into the app is used in 'flat' mode that one really doesn't need the slightly ham-fisted sound profile presets provided – the classical one sounds especially disconnected – and that the effect modes available are well worth swerving. There is a custom equaliser with which to fiddle, and a sound check facility to compare various equaliser modes, but I'd stick to no more than a little bass or treble adjustment if really required.



### SENNHEISER PXC550

**Type** Noise-cancelling wireless headphones

**Price** £330

**Design** Circumaural, closed back

**Connections** Bluetooth with aptX, 3.5mm stereo input

**Impedance** 490 ohms (active), 46 ohms (passive)

**Max SPL** 100dB

**Battery** 3-hour charge, max 30 hours use

**Accessories supplied** Charging cable, audio cable with 3.5mm plugs, airline plug adapter, carrying case

**Weight** 227g (without cable)

**sennheiser.com**

Also impressive is that the NoiseGard system doesn't 'sit on the music' as I have heard some such systems do in the past; but it should be noted that the Bluetooth connection, while more than adequate for most listening, is shaded somewhat by the sound of the headphones when fed with a direct cable connection, at which point the sound simply seems rather more lively and dynamic. So not being able to use wireless at 36,000ft isn't going to be anything of a hardship.

I have to say I really like the Sennheiser headphones. They aren't going to trouble the likes of the Bowers & Wilkins P9 Signature or the Oppo PM-1, which outshine them when it comes to sheer clarity and power, not to mention bass extension. But then, both of these designs are both considerably more expensive and best suited to sofa listening, rather than use on the move, and the PXC550's combination of comfort, flexibility and performance is sure to find it plenty of 'discerning' fans. ●

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Pictured: Violinist Janine Jansen (DECCA/© Marco Borggreve) who featured on the January 2016 cover of Gramophone. Full annual retail price for print only (13 issues) is £74.75; print only annual subscription, Digital Edition and reviews Database (£64); Digital Club (£84); Gramophone Club (£106). Postage and packaging is not included for overseas orders. Overseas subscription p&p: Europe £22.80, Rest of World £27.00. If you have a subscription enquiry then please email [subscriptions@markallengroup.com](mailto:subscriptions@markallengroup.com)

## ● ESSAY

# Is it time for the online audio companies to start pulling in the same direction?

Format and service wars confuse consumers – but things are becoming clearer

I've recently written an extensive piece for the *Gramophone* website designed to act as a beginner's guide to streaming audio ([gramophone.co.uk/feature/music-streaming](http://gramophone.co.uk/feature/music-streaming)), and did so with a growing realisation that there's a baffling range of services and file formats out there, and anyone wanting access to the widest possible range of content really needs to be thinking in terms of signing up for at least a couple of the offerings available.

The other inescapable conclusion is that, for all of their attempts at wooing the audio enthusiast as well as the casual listener, most of these services are currently best accessed using either a smartphone or tablet or, at best, some kind of less-than-ideal set-up involving the connection of a home computer to the hi-fi system. The problem is that the model on which streaming services have been built is – as is so often the case in anything to do with consumer electronics – one of competing formats and standards, with each service aiming to be the one you buy to the exclusion of all others. No thought has ever been given to the interoperability of the streaming service because – well, because if you sign up with one of them, the company operating it would quite like to lock you in, at least for a reasonable amount of time, to keep the investors happy.

But it is an untenable system in the long term, just as having certain films available on one disc format, and others on another, has proved in the past. Or having one digital TV platform offering channels not available on others.

These things tend to shake out over time: hardware format wars are resolved, as the HD-DVD/Blu-ray thing was with the arrival of 'universal' players and the eventual demise of Blu-ray's rival, and it's now possible to get (almost) all of Sky's channels on the Virgin Media platform if you're prepared to pay for them, along with the channels previously only available to BT Internet subscribers. Now all we have to do is sort out the variety of 4K high-resolution TV formats now exercising the minds of television manufacturers: a recent press release for an AV product tells us it offers '4K/60Hz full-rate pass-through,



Audirvana: a solution to the streaming problem?

4:4:4 colour resolution, HDR, BT.2020 and Dolby Vision, plus Hybrid Log Gamma (HLG) via future firmware update', all to ensure wide-ranging compatibility with current and forthcoming 4K TV standards.

## Switching between rival streaming services should be as simple as changing radio channels

If we're to avoid that kind of format confusion – or rather not exacerbate the current situation – it's time for online audio to grow up, with everyone pulling in the same direction. And that means a single interface, through which any service can be accessed simply and easily, without all the kerfuffle of swapping between browsers and apps. If we really must have rival streaming services – and in a free market, that will always be so – then switching between them should be as simple as changing radio channels, and the content on each should just play, without requiring the user to have an intimate working knowledge of a computer's sound set-up.

Fortunately, there are signs things are changing for the better, with software and hardware manufacturers working to integrate rival services into single interfaces, despite the licensing nightmares this can involve. Regular readers will

know I am a big fan of the Roon software platform, which manages seamless integration between a personal network music library, stored on a computer or network storage device, and the Tidal streaming service (subject, of course, to the user having the appropriate subscription).

Roon also builds in internet radio, so with one control device – which can be a computer, smartphone or tablet – one can access all of this music, build playlists and play content out to Roon-capable devices all around the home. And with the number of audio components able to act as Roon 'endpoints' – or, in other words, devices to which Roon can play – growing all the time, the system keeps expanding its compatibility and appeal.

On the hardware front, the second-generation Naim Uniti components have finally gone on sale, complete with Google Chromecast integration for compatibility with the widest range of current and future audio services. However, the near-year-long delay between announcement and sales does show the complexity of the hoops through which such a manufacturer needs to jump in order to meet all the licensing and certification requirements involved.

An even simpler solution has arrived from the French developer of the excellent Audirvana music player software. The latest version of Audirvana+, 3.1 – which is in beta at the time of writing but expected to be a full release by the time you read this – not only integrates local libraries with Qobuz and Tidal, plus files stored in one's 'virtual vault' on the German-based [highresaudio.com](http://highresaudio.com) download site, but is also now able to play out to any UPnP-compatible device it finds on your home network. And that means, whether you have a simple network radio or a high-end network music player connected to your hi-fi, you can play library music or streaming services with ease. And with a range of network devices from a variety of brands available during the writing of this piece, I was able to ascertain that it worked, entirely seamlessly, controlled by the Audirvana Remote app on a tablet. For just €74, that's something of a bargain. **G**

# Oranges & Lemons

*of Battersea*

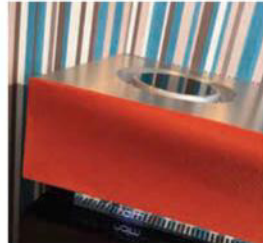
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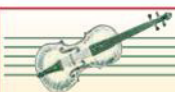
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# NOTES & LETTERS

Karajan's Ring cycle • Tyrannical conductors • Musical theatre

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## Ring the changes ...

In his otherwise quite marvellous article 'Still Wielding The Ring's Power' about Herbert von Karajan's legendary *Ring* cycle (July) Hugo Shirley makes two small factual mistakes: the lavish production of *Boris Godunov* at the Salzburg Festival was not by Franco Zeffirelli, but rather by Karajan himself. The other mistake is when Mr Shirley writes, 'Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Karajan's *Rheingold* Wotan on disc (Stewart sang the role in Salzburg) ...' Fischer-Dieskau *did* sing the role in Salzburg during the first year of the *Das Rheingold* production (1968). There is a recording of the live performance with him from the 1968 Easter Festival. Moreover, it was after the last performance in Salzburg that Fischer-Dieskau got into a very bad car accident on a drive from Salzburg to his home in Munich. Stewart indeed sang Wotan the following year in Salzburg and again during the revival in 1973 (when a very different cast led by Stewart also recorded a soundtrack for a 1978 film).

Valery Ryvkin

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

## ... and Karajan vs Solti

Is the Karajan *Ring* really overshadowed by Solti's? I do not wish to denigrate Solti in any way but in the case of the *Ring* I always find myself going back to Karajan which is always beautiful, dramatic and somehow more consistently imaginative. Nor do I particularly care for Solti's Siegfried, Windgassen, whose top notes sound elderly, notably marring Forest Murmurs. So, the answer is, not for everyone.

John Stone

London

## Half a lifetime of Gramophone

I received my September issue today, Number 1152. My first was No 577 in June 1971, so I have now had half the *Gramophone* magazines published. Indeed, I still have all of them. The enjoyment they have brought is beyond measure. Long may it continue. I send 576 thank yous to all those responsible for the magazine and its contents. Keep up the excellent work!

Ian Boswell, via email

## Letter of the Month

### Chineke! is shaking up audiences for the better



Chi-chi Nwanoku heads up Chineke!

I read Mark Pullinger's review of the Chineke! Orchestra disc with interest (September). I was in the audience at the Royal Festival Hall last year when this recording was made (and indeed when they were at the same venue this summer). What is particularly significant I think is the very diverse audience that their concerts have attracted. Orchestras at most concerts I attend are often

exclusively white and the number of BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) audience members is usually in single figures. The Festival Hall audiences for Chineke! have been predominantly BME and considerably younger than is the norm in my experience. Chineke! are to be applauded for bringing a very different audience to classical music.

David Gleave, via email

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## Saying no to tyrant maestros

In Rob Cowan's review of Harvey Sachs's biography (August), he asserts that Toscanini's 'benign rage' was responsible for the quality of his performances, implying that we are now worse off without it. It rather echoes the view of the *Private Eye* music correspondent a few years ago who stated quite seriously that fine performances were only possible by conductors 'putting the fear of God' into the players, citing George Szell and Fritz Reiner. There was an immediate riposte from players and music lovers who pointed out, quite rightly, that equally fine performances were obtained by such as Beecham, Giulini and Bruno

Walter, who took completely the opposite approach. I, for one, welcome the demise of the tyrant conductor.

Michael Boyle

London

## Marie-Nicole mix-up?

I greatly enjoyed Tully Potter's article on contraltos in the Awards issue, and his highlighting of Marie-Nicole Lemieux in particular. However, there seems to be some confusion about 'V'adamo pupille' in Handel's *Giulio Cesare*. This is Cleopatra's seduction aria early in Act 2, at the centre of the 'Parnassus' scene, and is sung in Alan Curtis's recording not by Lemieux (who sings Caesar) but by

the soprano Karina Gauvin. Curiously, the booklet accompanying Curtis's recording makes the same misattribution, perhaps because Caesar sings the preceding recitative. Both singers are magnificent, and there is another fine contralto in this recording: Romina Basso, who sings Cornelia, the noblest character in the opera.

Robert Allen  
Edinburgh

*Tully Potter writes: Mr Allen is absolutely right, and when I was looking for an aria to represent Lemieux's Caesar I was misled by the booklet – and by the aria's low tessitura. I must stress that Lemieux sings a number of arias brilliantly in that set. Mr Allen is also right to draw attention to Romina Basso. I have several of her recordings, including the Naïve recital 'Lamento', and she is superb.*

## OBITUARIES

A violinist from a musical family; a prolific British composer

### DMITRI KOGAN

*Violinist*

*Born October 27, 1978*

*Died August 29, 2017*



The Russian violinist Dmitri Kogan has died from lymphatic cancer aged 38. He came from a Russian musical dynasty: his grandfather was the great Russian

violinist Leonid Kogan, and his grandmother was the violinist Elizabeth Gilels (sister of the pianist Emil Gilels). Kogan's father is Pavel Kogan, the violinist and conductor.

Kogan began playing the violin aged four, and by six was studying at the Moscow Central Music School. He made his solo debut with an orchestra at Moscow Conservatoire's Grand Hall aged 15, and in 1996 began his studies at the Moscow Conservatoire and the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. Kogan was instrumental in founding the Volga Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra in 2011 and the Arctic Festival of Classical Music in 2014. He held artistic directorships at the International Kogan Festival (which he founded in 2007) and the Moscow Camerata (from 2014); one of his projects with Moscow Camerata, 'Five Great Violins in One Concert', came to the Barbican in 2015 and featured instruments from five different celebrated historical luthiers.

### No business like show business

I enjoyed the Specialist's Guide on Broadway musicals (June). I've often felt that musical theatre really deserves a place in your magazine. Could you lure Edward Seckerson from the posh side?

Barry Serjent  
London

*We had just decided to give more coverage to musicals when your letter arrived! See p86 for Seckerson's 'Dear Evan Hansen' review – Ed.*

### Editorial notes

Regarding Andrew Mellor's review (September) of 'Like as the Hart' on Novum, featuring the Choir of New College, Oxford under Robert Quinney, Baroque strings and bows *were* in fact used in the recording of Buxtehude's *Quemadmodum desiderat cervus*.

'Five Great Violins' also proved to be Kogan's last recording, the culmination of a discography that began with a CD of three Brahms violin sonatas in 2002. Other notable recordings include the two Shostakovich violin concertos for Delos in 2006 with Maxim Shostakovich conducting the Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra, and violin duos with Marianna Vassilieva in 2007, also for Delos.

### DEREK BOURGEOIS

*Composer and academic*

*Born October 16, 1941*

*Died September 6, 2017*



Born in Kingston upon Thames, Bourgeois studied at Cambridge and the Royal College of Music, where he worked with Herbert Howells (composition) and Sir Adrian Boult (conductor). He was a lecturer at Bristol University (1971-84) and was Director of Music at St Paul's Girls School. He was also Director of the National Youth Orchestra from 1984 to 1993.

He was a prolific composer, writing frequently for brass band. But his most fertile area was symphonic writing – at his death he'd written 114 symphonies. He also wrote music for television including 1982's *The Barchester Chronicles* for the BBC.

## NEXT MONTH NOVEMBER 2017



### Mozart's Requiem

As René Jacobs releases his much-anticipated recording on Harmonia Mundi, David Threasher assesses the many attempts to complete this unfinished masterpiece

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Our annual guide to the increasing opportunities for music lovers who want to enjoy live concerts and opera from the comfort of their own homes

### Haydn's Cello Concerto No 1

Charlotte Gardner compares the diverse approaches to Haydn's C major Concerto, the work believed to be lost until a Prague librarian discovered it in 1961

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**Millöcker** Waltzes, Marches & Polkas. *Nuremberg SO/Simonis.* ① **CPO555 004-2**

**Suppé** Ritorno del Marinaio. *Sols/Rijeka Op SO/Martinolli D'Arcy.* ① **CPO555 120-2**

### DELPHIAN delphianrecords.co.uk

**Various Cpsrs** Music for the Queen of Heaven. *Marian Consort/McCleery.* ① **DCD34190**

**Various Cpsrs** O Holy Night: A Merton Christmas. *Ch of Merton Coll, Oxford/Nicholas.* ① **DCD34192**

### DIVINE ART divine-art.co.uk

**Debussy. Onslow. Poulenc** France Revisited. *Pf à Deux.* ① **DDA25132**

**Various Cpsrs** Christmas Card Carols. *Intimate Voices/Stokes.* ① **DDA25161**

**Various Cpsrs** Vn Muse. *Mitchell/BBC NOW/Outwater.* ① **DDA25160**

### DYNAMIC dynamicclassics.com

**Saint-Saëns** Rare Pf Wks. *Patuzzi.* ① **CDS7796**

### EDICIONES SINGULARES edicionessingulares.com

**Godard** Dante. *Sols incl Montvidas & Gens/Munich Rad Orch/Schirmer.* ① ② **ES1029**

### ERATO warnerclassics.com

**Mendelssohn** Stg Qts Nos 2 & 4. *Arod Qt.* ① **9029 57611-2**

### FIERI fiericonsort.co.uk

**Marenzio. Monteverdi. Rowarth** Tears of a Lover: Monteverdi & Reflections. *Fieri Consort.* ① **FIERO01TOAL**

### GENUIN genuin.de

**Schubert** Wehmut – Cpte Chor Wks for Male Voices, Vol 3. *Camerata Musica Limburg/Schumacher.* ① **GEN17474**

**Various Cpsrs** O sanctissima, o du fröhliche – Christmas Wks. *MDR Rad Chor/Ahmann.* ① **GEN17484**

**Various Cpsrs** Russian Classics. *Saxon Wind Philh/Clamora.* ① **GEN17480**

**Various Cpsrs** Wks for Vc & Pf. *Worlitzsch/Brauss.* ① **GEN17463**

### THE GIFT OF MUSIC thegiftofmusic.com

**Various Cpsrs** Carols for a Victorian Christmas. *Various artists.* ① **CCLCDG1292**

### GRAMOLA gramola.at

**Mozart** ABC – Pf Wks. *Okada.* ① **99144**

**Various Cpsrs** Crossings – Wks for Fl & Gtr. *Cimoszko, G & J.* ① **99143**

**Various Cpsrs** Imagination. *Sajka-Bachler/Krampe/Pandolfis Consort.* ① **99161**

**Various Cpsrs** Viaggio nel tempo – Wks for Db & Pf. *Rácz/Trisko.* ① **99102**

**Various Cpsrs** Weihnachten mit .... *Unterreiner.* ① **99128**

### GRAND PIANO grandpiano.com

**Brahms** Transcrs for Solo Pf by Paul Klengel. *Williams, C.* ① **GP749**

**Fišer** Cpte Pf Sons. *Šimurdová.* ① **GP770**

**Kalomiris** Cpte Wks for Solo Pf. *Chauzu.* ① **GP748**

### HÄNSSLER CLASSIC haenssler-classic.de

**Bach, CPE** Edn. *Various artists.* ② (54 discs) **HC16000**

**Bach, JS** Ein feste Burg. *Rilling.* ② **HC16031**

**Bach, JS** Goldberg Vars. *Muller.* ② **HC17059**

**Bach, JS** Pf Transcrs *Beethoven* Pf Sons Nos 14 & 23. *Hatzopoulos.* ① **HC16021**

**Brahms. Janáček** Cl Sons. *Brill/Aner.* ① **HC17001**

**Loewe. Schubert** In Erikónigs Reich – Ballads. *Jerusalem, D/Schneider.* ① **HC17012**

**Mozart** Cpte Vn Sons. *Sitkovetsky/Pappano/Lifschitz.* ② ④ ⑤ **HC17013**

**Zaderatsky** Pf Wks. *Nemtsov.* ② ⑤ **HC17035**

**Various Cpsrs** Americas – Gtr Wks. *Bardesio.* ① **HC16090**

**Various Cpsrs** Celebrating .... *Geringas.* ① **HC16033**

**Various Cpsrs** Stille Nacht: Panflute Christmas. *Pan/Celebration Ens.* ② **HC17056**

### HARMONIA MUNDI harmoniamundi.com

**Beethoven. Schubert** Wks for Vc & Pf. *Philippe/de Willencourt.* ② **HMN911 6109**

**Berg. Kurtág. Schumann** Stg Qts. *Gerhard.* ② **HMN911 6108**

**Chausson. Ysaÿe** Wks for Vn & Pf. *Bouchkov/Dubko.* ② **HMN911 6106**

**Various Cpsrs** Traditional & Popular Music of 18th-century Ireland & Scotland. *Curious Bards.* ② **HMN911 6105**

**Various Cpsrs** Zuguambé: Wks from the Monastery of S Cruz de Coimbra. *Capella Sanctae Crucis/Freire, TS.* ② **HMN911 6107**

### HYPERION hyperion-records.co.uk

**Chopin** Pf Son No 2. Scherzo No 2. Preludes. *Tiberghien.* ① **CDA68194**

**Coke** Pf Concs Nos 3-5. *Callaghan/BBC Scottish SO/Brabbins.* ① **CDA68173**

**Fauré** Requiem. Sacred Wks. *Yale Schola Cantorum/Hill/Bennesh.* ① **CDA68209**

**Vaughan Williams** London Sym. Orch Wks. *BBC SO/Brabbins.* ① **CDA68190**

### ICA CLASSICS icartists.co.uk

**Mozart. Ravel. Tchaikovsky** Orch Wks (bp1955-56). *Haskil/Philh Orch/Karajan.* ② ③ **ICAC5142**

**Tchaikovsky** Sleeping Beauty (pp2013). *St Academic SO of Russia 'Evgeny Svetlanov'/Jurowski, V.* ② **ICAC5144**

**Various Cpsrs** BBC Legends, Vol 2. *Various artists.* ② (20 discs) **ICAB5141**

### KAİROS kaïros-music.com

**Billone** Equilibrio. *Cerchio. Fusi.* ① **0015019KAI**

**Jakober** Substantie. *Various artists.* ① **0015007KAI**

**Lang, B** Cold Trip. *Various artists.* ① **0015018KAI**

### KLANGLOGO klanglogo.de

**Various Cpsrs** Jungle Baroque: Music From a Golden Era. *Szarán/Sonidos de Paraquaria.* ① **KL1414**

### LINN linnrecords.com

**Mahler. Schumann** Lieder. *Boesch/Martineau.* ① **CKD511**

**Haydn. Monn** Vc Concs. *Morris, C/SCO.* ① **CKD562**

### LPO lpo.co.uk

**Various Cpsrs** Orch Wks (pp2007-17). *LPO/Jurowski.* ③ ⑦ ⑧ **LPO1010**

**MARCO POLO** naxos.com/mp.htm  
Various Cpsrs Contemporaries of the Strauss Family, Vol 3.  
Czech Chbr PO, Pardubice/Georgiadis. **F** **8 225368**

**MELODIYA** melody.su  
Medtner. Shostakovich Pf Qnts. *Berlinskaya/New Russian Qt.*  
**F** **MELCD100 2486**

Schubert Pf Sons Nos 16 & 21 (r2006). *Martynov.*  
**F** **MELCD100 2504**

**MÉTIER** divine-art.co.uk  
Braid Songs, Solos & Duos. *Sols incl Overbury.* **F** **MSV28575**

**MIRARE** mirare.fr  
Beethoven Vn Sons Nos 3, 7 & 10. *Lopez/Gratton.* **F** **MIR360**  
Mompou Pf Wks. *Perez.* **F** **MIR364**

**MSR CLASSICS** msrcd.com  
Hernesniemi Bridge: Wks for Pf & Clavinova. *Hernesniemi.*  
**F** **MS1615**

Stravinsky Rite of Spring. Three Movts from Petrushka.  
*Lomazov-Rackers Pf Duo.* **F** **MS1628**

Various Cpsrs Breaking Ground – A Celebration of Women  
Cpsrs. *Bunning.* **F** **MS1658**

Various Cpsrs Resonant Streams: Choral Wks from Sun to Sea.  
*U of Washington Chorale/Wyers.* **F** **MS1642**

**NAXOS** naxos.com  
Baker Pf Conc. Aus Schwanengesang. *Hamelin/Indianapolis SO/*  
*Varga/Mena.* **M** **8 559804**

Bizet Carmen Stes. L'arlésienne Stes. *Barcelona SO/González.*  
**M** **8 573546**

Brian Symms Nos 8, 21 & 26. *New Russia St SO/Walker, A.*  
**M** **8 573752**

Cavazzoni Cpte Hpd Wks. *Wilson.* **M** **8 572998**

Chopin Cpte Pf Wks. *Biret/Slovak St PO/Stankovsky.*  
**S** **15** **8 501503**

Clementi Kybd Sons. *Rodríguez.* **M** **8 573608**

Granados Orch Wks. *Barcelona SO/González.*  
**S** **3** **8 503295**

Klengel Cpte Vc Concertinos. *Rummel/Kato.* **M** **8 573793**

Liszt Cpte Pf Wks, Vol 47. *Kramer.* **M** **8 573385**

Piazzolla Legacy. *Cotik/Lin.* **M** **8 573789**

Prokofiev Childhood Manuscripts. Pf Wks. *Dossin.* **M** **8 573435**

Prokofiev Sym No 7. Orch Wks. *São Paulo SO/Alsop.*  
**M** **8 573620**

Rachmaninov Cpte Solo Pf Wks & Pf Concs. *Biret/Polish*  
*Nat RSO/Wit.* **S** **10** **8 501065**

Rossini Demetrio e Polibio. *Sols/Virtuosi Brunensis/Acocella.*  
**M** **2** **8 660405/6**

Saint-Saëns Wks for Vc & Orch. *Schwabe/Malmö SO/Soustrot.*  
**M** **8 573737**

Various Cpsrs Del Caribe, soy! – Latin American FI Wks. *Torres/*  
*Various artists.* **M** **8 579016**

Various Cpsrs Romantic Wks for Hp. *Haas.* **M** **8 579015**

**NIBIRU** nibiru-publishers.com/en/kategorie/music/  
Ryba Stabat mater. *Sols incl Šaturová/Martinů Voices/L'Armonia*  
*Terrena/Klauda.* **F** **162**

Zelenka Psalmi Vespertini, Vol 2. *Ens Inégal/Prague Baroque*  
*Sols/Viktora.* **F** **163**

**NONESUCH** nonesuch.com  
Andriessen Theatre of the World. *Los Angeles PO/de Leeuw.*  
**M** **2** **7559 79361-8**

**OEHMS** oehmsclassics.de  
Elgar. Korngold. Schumann Vc Concs (pp2017). *Yang/Taiwan*  
*Nat SO/Lü.* **F** **OC1883**

Graun Christmas Oratorio. *Sols/L'Arpa Festante/Gropper.*  
**F** **OC1876**

**ONDINE** ondine.net  
Beethoven Pf Conc No 3. Triple Conc. *Tetzlaff, C & T/Royal*  
*Northern Sinf/Vogt.* **F** **ODE1297-2**

Sibelius Tapiola. En saga. Songs (orch Sallinen). *Otter/*  
*Finnish RSO/Lintu.* **F** **ODE1289-5**

Virtaperko Romer's Gap – Concs. *Kivilaakso/Knif/Rautiola/*  
*Jyväskylä Sinf/Matvejeff.* **F** **ODE1305-2**

**ONYX** onyxclassics.com  
Various Cpsrs Company – Stg Qts. *Borusan Qt.* **F** **ONYX4171**

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Various Cpsrs Discovery Recitals. *Jette Parker Young Artists.*  
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Butler. Patterson Revolving Rhymes & Marvellous Music.  
*Magnard Ens/Kenny.* **F** **ORC100071**

Elgar 'Enigma' Vars *Chadwick Sym Sketches. BBC NOW/*  
*Constantine.* **F** **ORC100074**

**ORFEO** orfeo-international.de  
Beethoven Sym No 9 (pp1963). *Sols incl Janowitz/Bayreuth*  
*Fest Ch & Orch/Böhm.* **F** **C935 171B**

Beethoven. Brahms. Weber Orch Wks (pp1962). *Anda/*  
*Cologne RSO/Knappertsbusch.* **F** **C916 172A**

**PAVLÍK** pavlikrecords.sk  
Grieg Three Vn Sons. *Pala/Fanzowitz.* **B** **2** **PAO153-2-132**

Various Cpsrs Miniatures & Short Preludes – Org Wks. *Mesjar.*  
**F** **2** **PAO152-2-132**

**PENTATONE** pentatonemusic.com  
Britten. Hindemith Vn Concs. *Steinbacher/Berlin RSO/Janowski.*  
**F** **PTC5186 625**

Humperdinck Hänsel und Gretel. *Berlin RSO/Janowski.*  
**F** **2** **PTC5186 605**

**PROFIL** haensslerprofil.de  
Beethoven Symms Nos 3, 4 & 7. *Philh Festiva/Schaller.*  
**F** **2** **PH15030**

Brahms Sym No 2. 'Haydn' Vars. *WDR SO, Cologne/Saraste.*  
**F** **PH17057**

Zaderatsky Preludes & Fugues. *Nemtsov.* **F** **2** **PH15028**

Various Cpsrs Edn. *Richter, K.* **S** (31 discs) **PH16010**

Various Cpsrs Edn (r1948-63). *Sanderling, K.* **S** **13** **PH17018**

Various Cpsrs Edn, Vol 10. *Semperoper Dresden.*  
**M** **4** **PH17031**

Various Cpsrs Edn (r1974-80). *Tennstedt.* **S** **8** **PH17004**

Various Cpsrs Gtr Wks. *Wuttke.* **F** **PH15038**

**QUARTZ** quartzmusic.com  
Various Cpsrs Sons, Vars, Impromptus. *Morris, O.* **F** **QTZ2127**

**RESONUS** resonusclassics.com  
Durufié. Howells Requiems. *St Thomas Ch, New York/Scott.*  
**F** **RES10200**

Various Cpsrs Lo, how a rose e'er blooming – Christmas Wks.  
*Queen's Six.* **F** **RES10204**

Various Cpsrs Two Little Words. *Palmer/Lepper.* **F** **RES10199**

**RONDEAU PRODUCTION** rondeau.de  
Cherubini Requiem in C minor. *Chbr Ch of the Frauenkirche,*  
*Dresden/Altenburg-Gera PO/Grünert.* **F** **ROP6142**

Ludford Missa Dominica. *Trinity Boys Ch/Swinson.* **F** **ROP8001**

Various Cpsrs German Advent Songs. *Schwesterhochfünf.*  
**F** **ROP6128**

Various Cpsrs Romantic Transcrs for Org & Tpt. *Duo*  
*Fehse-Wilfert.* **F** **ROP6144**

**RUBICON**  
Bach, JS Kybd Concs. *Bach, S/ECO.* **M** **2** **RCD1006**

Graziani Sons for Vc & Continuo. *Cerrato/Demaria/Barchi.*  
**M** **2** **RCD1018**

**SEATTLE SYMPHONY MEDIA** recordings.seattlesymphony.org  
Messiaen Trois petites liturgies de la Présence Divine. Poèmes  
pour Mi. *Seattle SO/Morlot.* **F** **SSM1016**

**SHEVA COLLECTION** shevacollection.it  
Paus Odes & Elegies – Concertante & Solo Wks. *Various artists.*  
**F** **SH174**

**SIGNUM** signumrecords.com  
Various Cpsrs Gold. *King's Sgrs.* **F** **S** **SIGPP5001**

**SOLI DEO GLORIA** monteverdi.co.uk/sdg  
Bach, JS Cantata No 151. Magnificat, BWV243a. Mass, BWV233  
(pp2016). *Monteverdi Ch/EBS/Gardiner.* **F** **SDG728**

**SOLO MUSICA**  
Beethoven Symms Nos 1 & 3. *VSO/Jordan.* **F** **WS013**

Brahms Two Vc Sons. *Duo Leonore.* **F** **SM269**

Bruckner Chbr Sym (Stg Qnt) *Mahler Sym No 10 – Andante.*  
*Taschenphilh/Stangel.* **F** **ETP008**

Various Cpsrs Alphorn & Nordic Winds. *Paul Taylor Orch.*  
**F** **SM275**

Various Cpsrs Hommage à Ysaÿe. *Malov.* **F** **SM275**

**SOMM** somm-recordings.com  
Various Cpsrs British Vc. *Baillie/Thwaites.* **F** **SOMMCD0175**

Various Cpsrs Once More With Feeling .... Pf Encores. *Martin, P.*  
**F** **SOMMCD0176**

**STONE RECORDS** stonerecords.co.uk  
Holst. Rubbra. Vaughan Williams O Gladstone Light. *Willford/*  
*Bérard/Hamm/Philcox.* **F** **5060192 780765**

**SUPRAPHON** supraphon.com  
Dvořák Qnts, Opp 81 & 97. *Pavel Haas Qt/Giltburg/Nikl.*  
**F** **SU4195-2**

Martinů Epic of Gilgamesh. *Sols incl Crowe/Czech PO/Honeck.*  
**F** **SU4225-2**

**SWR MUSIC** swrmusic.com  
Bruckner Symms Nos 2-9. *SWF SO, Baden-Baden/Rosbaud.*  
**S** **8** **SWR19043CD**

Henze Chor Wks. *SWR Voc Ens, Stuttgart/Ens Modern/Creed.*  
**F** **SWR19049CD**

Koechlin Orch Wks. *SWR RSO, Stuttgart/Holliger.*  
**S** **7** **SWR19046CD**

Koechlin Chbr Wks. *Various artists.* **S** **7** **SWR19047CD**

Various Cpsrs Classical Arias (r1959). *Wunderlich.*  
**B** **2** **SWR19048CD**

Various Cpsrs Pf Wks (pp1994). *Richter.* **F** **SWR19409CD**

**TACTUS** tactus.it  
Lombardini Stg Qts. *Accademia della Magnifica Comunità/*  
*Casazza.* **M** **8** **TB731202**

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Storage, B Kybd Wks. *Cera.* **M** **2** **TB601990**

Sammartini Hpd Concs. *Piolanti.* **F** **TC701902**

Various Cpsrs Venetia mundi splendor. *Ens Oktoechos/Menga.*  
**F** **TC390001**

**TOCCATA CLASSICS** toccataclassics.com  
Farkas Orch Wks, Vol 5. *Farkas, G/MAV SO/Takács-Nagy.*  
**F** **TOCC0286**

Griller Orch Wks, Vol 1. *Myasnikov/Musica Viva/Walker.*  
**F** **TOCC0424**

Lassus Responsories for Holy Week. *Ars Cantica/Berrini.*  
**F** **TOCC0404**

Liszt Songs for Bass Voice & Pf. *Schwartz/Dibbern.*  
**F** **TOCC0441**

**TUDOR** tudor.ch  
Mozart FI Qts. *Nicolet/Munich Stg Trio.* **F** **8** **TUDOR7502**

Schubert Cpte Pf Wks (r1968/70). *Schuchter.*  
**S** **12** **8** **TUDOR1640**

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Carpenter Christine. *OST.* **F** **8** **302 067 500-1**

Kerber Cello. *OST.* **F** **302 067 524-8**

Pierson. Nilsson Popeye. *OST.* **M** **2** **302 067 430-8**

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Schiffrin Wks. *Bernard.* **F** **302 067 523-8**

Various Cpsrs American Made. *OST.* **M** **2** **302 067 527-8**

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Rachmaninov All-Night Vigil. *Wyn-Rogers/Tunncliffe/*  
*Vasari Sgrs/Backhouse.* **F** **VIMACD003**

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Cage Chess Pieces. Four Dances *Johnson, T Rational Melodies.*  
*Trio Omphalos.* **F** **WER7370-2**

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Zender Dialog mit Haydn. *Various artists.* **F** **WER7339-2**

Various Cpsrs Stille. *Edn Musikfabrik.* **F** **WER6865-2**

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Mozart Lucio Silla (pp2016). *Sols incl Crebassa/Scala, Milan/*  
*Minkowski.* **F** **2** **DVD 743308**; **F** **BD 743404**

**DYNAMIC**  
Bellini Norma (pp2016). *Sols incl Siri & Ganassi/Marche*  
*Regional Orch/Gamba, M.* **F** **DVD 37768**; **F** **BD 57768**

**MARCO POLO** naxos.com/mp.htm  
Wagner, S An Allem ist Hütchen Schuld!. *Sols/Bochum SO/*  
*Friend.* **F** **DVD 23 220006**






































**OPUS ARTE**  
Tchaikovsky Nutcracker (pp2016). *Royal Op Orch/Gruzin.*  
**F** **DVD OA1252D**; **F** **BD OA8D7229D**

**TONY PALMER FILMS**  
Rachmaninov His Letters. *Various artists.*  
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# Simon Hopkinson

The food writer, critic and former chef-patron of Bibendum on his experience as a chorister and how it influenced his work in the kitchen

**The first job** I had, which was in the school holidays, was at a restaurant in Lancashire – near home – called La Normandie. Yves Champeau, the chef, thought I was pretty OK and he'd apparently said 'I'm astonished at this 16-year-old who just does what he's told and gets on with it', and Clive Jenkinson, who'd been in the restaurant business for years, replied, 'That's because he was a bloody chorister, wasn't he?' And Clive should have known as he'd been a chorister himself, at Salisbury.

**I tried for** King's College Choir, Cambridge, when I was about eight. I was absolutely terrified, and am not at all surprised I didn't pass. Then I tried for John's and *did* get in – slightly by the skin of my teeth, I think. I played the recorder which slightly took them by surprise – they didn't know I could play it and had it with me. That was good because George Guest was nicely impressed that I used the initiative. Then there was a tiny, almost quiz-like series of questions and I got on the short list.

**As a celebration** – and this is a really fond memory – I was taken to lunch at the Blue Boar in Cambridge. The treat was a prawn cocktail and I've never forgotten it because that dish was absolutely it, it was *so* exciting. (Food was already there for me – this was 1963 – as I had parents who liked cooking anyway.) Then it came to singing in the chapel, so it was getting to nerve-racking point! I'd chosen 'Glad that I live am I', a modernish hymn with lots of high and low notes, and I sang it in the choir stalls, Mum and Dad sitting down in the nave. And after I'd finished they heard me, in this piping voice, saying to Mr Guest 'Is that where I'll sit when I'm a chorister?' My mother burying her head in shame!

**George Guest** got a lovely sound out of the choir. At the time, King's seemed to be very breathy. We used to do a joint service with King's each year, and we did the 900th anniversary of Westminster Abbey together – you could hear the difference in the voices immediately. And of course we were great rivals. Their school was just down Grange Road and when we saw the choir crossing the road we'd try and get in the way, and shout at them!

**The singing** was fantastic and what we sang then I can still sing today, it'll never go away. I've some very old friends and both their children went to Wells and sang in the choir there and whenever I see them, George, the son, and I will start to sing 'Rejoice in the lamb' or some Rubbra! Rubbra in A flat – the one that's almost spookily low.

**Cooking** is a vocation, like making music. One of the things that made me step back from the stove is that I lost the passion. People used to say to me 'You're much more a cook



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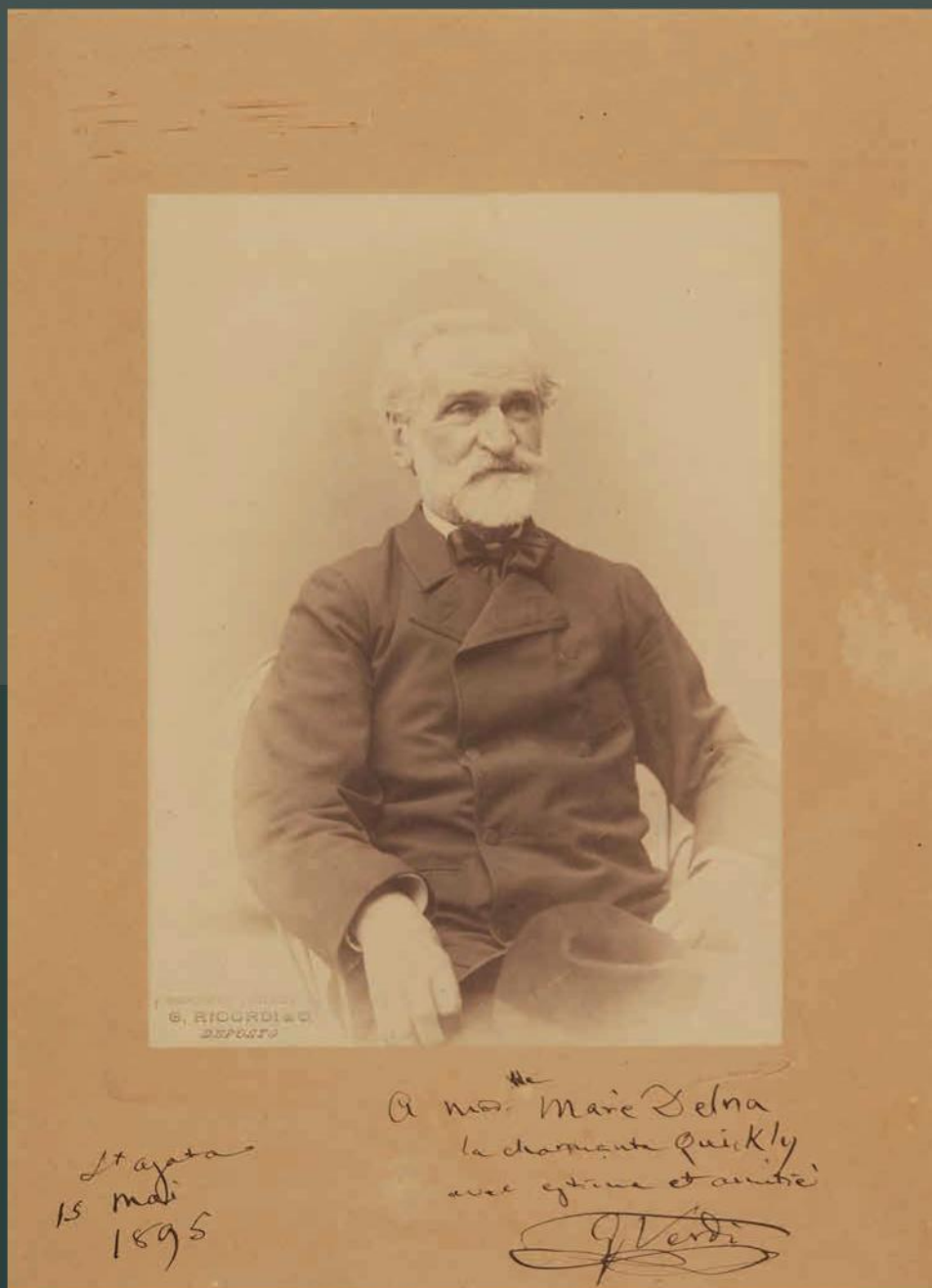
I remember encountering this on 'Desert Island Discs' chosen by Marcus du Sautoy – amazing!

than a chef. But I was a good chef, keeping my band of boys and girls together. My favourite service was lunch. I loved getting everything ready. And when it came to about 12.15pm I often felt I'd like to have gone home because I'd done the bit I most enjoyed!

**I don't know** how close the analogy between conductor and chef can go but there are certainly things in common. One does actually use the word 'orchestrating' of a kitchen ... If I recognised that someone had that spark I would encourage them to come up with some ideas. If it was someone I knew was going to be good, I'd say 'Why would you do that?' There was a boy who was on pastry for a while who wanted to do raspberries in a tart with saffron. And I said 'That sounds awful'. Anyway, the next week he made it and it was absolutely delicious! They would come up with some really good things. Really inspired.

**These days** I'm more a Radio 4 than a Radio 3 person. I'm not drawn so much to the 'greats', rather I like more unusual music like Messiaen which takes me back to singing 'O sacrum convivium' at John's – it's so difficult, the intervals between the notes are so small. We used to do it quite slowly. I didn't realise at the time what a beautiful piece it is. **G**

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